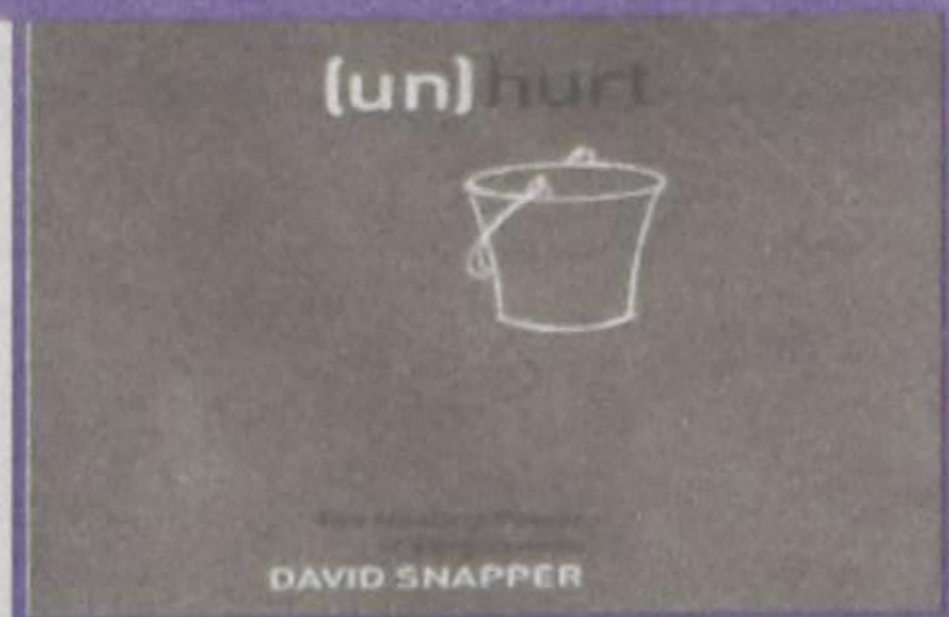




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CHRISTIANCOURIER



Syrian refugee crisis grows as conflict continues

Dena Nicolai

"It is war – it is horror." That's how World Renew's Wayne de Jong described Syria after his recent trip to the Middle East. A report from the United Nations provides the statistics: "As of July 2013 . . . more than 4.5 million [Syrians] are internally displaced, and more than 1.7 million are refugees in neighbouring countries."

Amidst the daily reports of bloodshed, such as the UN's tally of over 100,000 dead in the last 24 months, concern is growing over the refugee crisis. De Jong, Director of Disaster Response and Rehabilitation for the CRC's World Renew, travelled through Jordan and Lebanon and said that "the whole region is headed for a catastrophic humanitarian crisis."

Quoting the United Nations, the

U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom reported that "by the end of 2013, more than half of Syria's population, over 10 million people, likely will need urgent humanitarian assistance."

A plea for aid

In a June teleconference with Christian media, Dave Toyce, president and CEO of World Vision Canada, spoke of his own recent trip to Lebanon and Jordan. He noted World Vision's challenge in raising sufficient funds to help Syrian refugees there.

"It's a difficult 'ask'," Toyce says, explaining that people are more likely to give to natural disaster relief than to victims of war, as donors often see those in conflict zones as being responsible for the violence. The request for financial



Displaced children at Bab al-Salam refugee camp within Syria.

assistance is further complicated by the fact that there is no clear solution to what is happening in Syria.

Yet conditions for Syrian refugees are deteriorating in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon, with the

latter two countries in particular feeling stretched to provide for the thousands that cross their borders each week. Temporary camps have been created, and living conditions are poor, with food and

medical care increasingly limited. To the east of Syria, even Iraq looks like a safe haven. Several thousand Syrians now live just over the border, in shock that they – who once welcomed Iraqis as refugees from a chaotic land – are now the ones in need of aid.

In Egypt, the continuing instability and recent ouster of President Mohammed Morsi has impacted what was reportedly one of the preferred destinations for Syrian refugees.

"From what I know, all Syrians here want their families to come from Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan," Ismail Snosy tells *Christian Courier*. Snosy is an Egyptian working with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in Cairo.

See Refugee crisis on p. 2

Time to get this right

Joel Veldkamp reflects carefully on what lies ahead for Christians in particular: "An Egyptian Christian told me that the Church in Egypt must pray and prepare for a couple of decades of persecution. Somehow, that gave me hope for the Syrian refugees I spoke with. It looks bad for the Christians in the Middle East, but there is time – we have time to get this right." And by "get this right," he means that North American Christians have a responsibility in all of this. "God can and will do what he wants," he continues, but he is firm about the fact that this acknowledgment does not dissolve us of our charge to push our governments towards non-military intervention. "Our governments – in Canada, in the U.S. – are the only ones that can work towards a political solution. President Obama, Prime Minister Harper – they're some of the only ones who can make this [political solution] happen."



Syrian Christians are suffering in the conflict; here, a destroyed church in Idlib province.

We are more than taxpayers

The hidden costs of the Senate scandal

Kathy Vandergrift

The Senate scandal lives on, as RCMP investigators scour receipts for evidence, reporters scramble to release the latest bit of news first, and a Mike Duffy balloon flies across from parliament hill. But the biggest cost of the Senate scandal is not making headlines.

We hear a lot about the misuse of tax dollars and how the reputation of the Conservative party has been damaged. Public trust in our political leaders, already low, has fallen further. The diversion of our attention from the major challenges facing Canada, however, carries the most costly long-term impact.



Interest in the scandal has ballooned beyond what it deserves.

Worse, it shrinks the way we think about public ethics and citizenship.

It is important to investigate and expose the misuse of public funds

for private benefit by Senators, but the amount of attention devoted to the personal expense accounts of Senators Mike Duffy and Pamela Wallin is out of proportion when compared with major issues that will shape Canada's future. When my grandchildren study the history of this period, they're not going to congratulate us for exposing Mike Duffy's expense accounts. Instead, they're more likely to wonder why we failed to act on the big issues that affect their world.

Widening gap

It is easy to make a long list of
See Taxpayers on p. 2

News

Refugee crisis *continued*

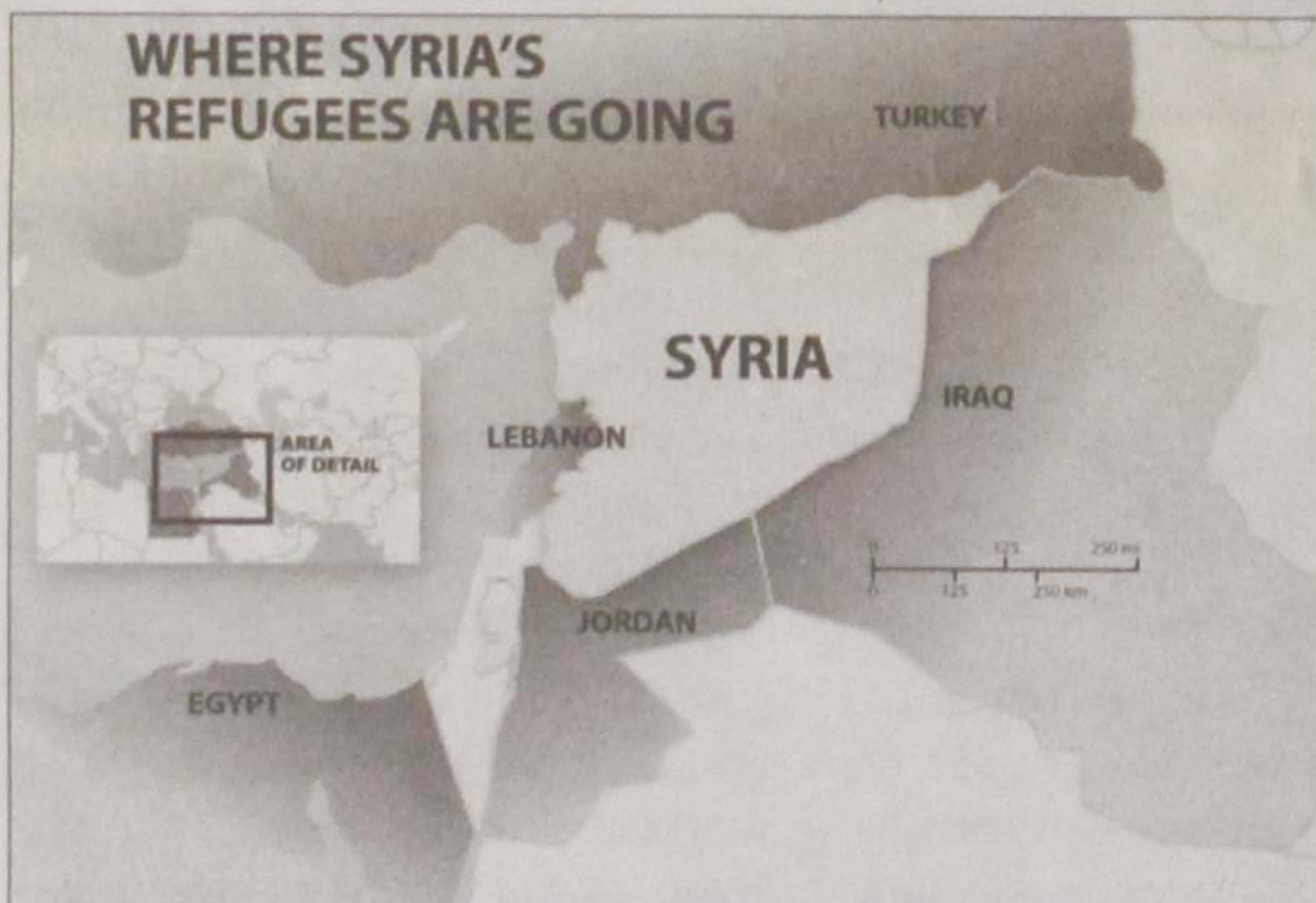
"Morsi gave [Syrians] a lot of rights – they were almost like Egyptian citizens," he adds. However, the preference for Egypt is changing as the military – now essentially in control – tightens restrictions on entry and spreads rumours via its media service regarding Syrian-Muslim Brotherhood collusion. Still, aid does continue via non-governmental organizations and others. "I can't say [the refugees] are having a great life, but we [the UNHCR] are helping as much as we can and Egyptians are helping as much as they can," Snosy observes.

Christians 'existentially threatened'

In a conflict that is harshly divided along sectarian lines, Christians are caught in the middle. With the Assad regime (minority Alawis) allying with Shiite Iran and the Lebanese Shiite Hezbollah, and many of the opposition groups receiving support from Sunni Al Qaeda, Christians are unsure where to turn.

Joel Veldkamp, who works for Christian Solidarity International in Washington, D.C., visited Lebanon in May to assess and monitor the situation of Syrian Christian refugees there. Having spent a year in Syria from 2010 – 2011, teaching English as a guest of the Greek Catholic Church, Veldkamp is familiar with the Christian community, and met with friends who have now fled to Lebanon. This included a visit with an Iraqi family, who first escaped Baghdad for Damascus and has now left Damascus for Beirut, in a con-

To learn more about the plight of Syrian refugees and how you can help with aid efforts, visit the websites of Christian Solidarity International, World Renew or World Vision.



tinuing flight from conflict. "The Christian minority in Syria is existentially threatened," Veldkamp says, and they make up a disproportionate number of refugees considering their small percentage in the overall Syrian population.

Christians, though not necessarily favouring the regime, have long found the stability and relative religious freedom brought by Assad and his father preferable to what they observe in surrounding countries. They are also nervous about the Islamic fundamentalism they see in many of the opposition groups. Yet when conflict first broke out two years ago, they were divided over who to support, disliking the authoritarianism of the regime and wondering if there might be a better option.

Today, the UNHCR explains the dilemma of Syrian Christian refugees well: "Christians and Alawites reportedly are not registering with [the UNHCR] because they fear negative repercussions from Sunni refugees identifying them with the regime. They reportedly also fear that if Bashar Al-Assad remains in power and they return to Syria, the Syrian government will view them as disloyal for having sought safe haven in a neighbouring country." Assad has also begun disproportionately drafting Christians into his forces against their will, assuming that they are and will remain loyal.

Deciding whether to stay or go

Meanwhile, for those with family still in Syria, the conversation over what happens next continues. Tarek Hajji Ahmad, 45, has been in Canada as a political refugee for seven years. His family are all still in Syria. Living in the south-eastern town of Al Mayadin, not far from the Iraqi border, they tried once to flee to Turkey, but were unable to get out. Unwilling to go to Iraq, they are now waiting, watching the situation each day and trying to decide on the best course of action.

Al Mayadin is currently under rebel control but Ahmad's family reports that even the rebels are divided, division which news reports say is increasingly common throughout the country. "They are fighting among themselves," Ahmad tells *Christian Courier*, "and there is no law, no police, no nothing."

Foreign intervention

As the opposition continues to wage war among itself and against the regime, foreign countries debate their next course of action. While in past media reports it seemed popular to support the rebels militarily as "freedom fight-



Living conditions in the temporary camps are poor.

ers" against a brutal regime, the reality is more complicated. "Military aid is the worst idea in the world," says Veldkamp. "That would be pouring oil on the fire." Instead, he advocates for pushing for more aid, while pushing even harder for a political solution. He stresses that aid is not and cannot be a long term answer and instead, our governments must work harder to pressure the Assad regime and its Russian supporters. "Russia and the regime will cooperate for peace," he says, but Western governments have found it easier to discuss military intervention than do the hard work of negotiation. Additionally, many Western governments would prefer a Sunni government in Damascus – one friendly with Western ally Saudi Arabia – and may resort to military action to achieve this *realpolitik* goal.

In the meantime, the refugees in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and elsewhere watch and wait, as do those within Syria. "I just wish for a safe country," says Ahmad. "But I don't know what will happen. I don't support the government or the opposition. I mean, how can Assad go back to power? I don't want to think about it. I suffered there for many years, from jail to jail." Yet, he looks to his people for hope. "I have my own thoughts [about a future government], but the people have their right to work on deciding. I really think the people just want to be safe. I think good things will happen, hopefully."

This hope, as faint and vague as it may be, is echoed even in the refugee camps outside Amman and Beirut and in the tenement housing in Cairo. As Toycen in Jordan, Veldkamp in Lebanon and Snosy in Egypt note, the vast majority of refugees are adamant about returning to Syria. "But it's hard to tell them to keep waiting," laments Snosy. "They just want to go home."

Dena Nicolai is a student in the Master of Christian Studies Program at Regent College in Vancouver.

We are more than taxpayers *continued*

issues that deserve more attention. Near the top of my list is having an informed debate on new energy policies to support a sustainable economy. The need for a comprehensive approach to the development, use and conservation of all kinds of energy is recognized across the political spectrum. The provincial premiers are talking about it amongst themselves, but there is no serious federal leadership on this matter.

Equally important, the social fabric that unites Canadians is in danger of falling apart without immediate attention. The Canada Social Transfer expires in 2014. This is the major federal/provincial funding agreement for community services, post-secondary education, child development and social assistance. It is as important as the higher profile Health Accord for public health and social cohesion.

I have been told privately there may not be a new agreement. Provinces may get more tax revenue to use as they wish, without any means to ensure equitable treatment of children or vulnerable people across the country. The outcome will be greater disparities in provincial support for low-income families and young people who need extra help.

Is this the kind of Canada we want? Most polls suggest that Canadians want a more equitable society, not less. But there is no public debate about major changes in social policy that will shape the future of our society.



There's no public debate about major changes in social policy, just finger pointing and grandstanding during Question Period.

Cloudy strategy

A third priority is genuine policy change to care for the environment. At the same time as new faces were added to cabinet, the Minister of the Environment was removed from the important cabinet committee on economic development, and its name was changed to remove "sustainable development" from its mandate. This does not bode well for protection of the environment as major development

projects are pushed forward.

We don't need to agree on the science of climate change in order to take action to reduce the high levels of pollutants we eject into our environment. Canada will not meet even its modest targets for the reduction of harmful emissions under existing policies. Canadian church leaders, motivated by the Bible's call to care for creation, have joined forces to ask Prime Minister Harper for a clear strategy that will do Canada's fair share to reduce the causes and mitigate the impacts of climate change. There are various proposals to achieve that goal. Meanwhile, we desperately need national political leadership to discuss, decide and implement practical measures across the country.

Smaller issues also wait for action. Adopting Supreme Court recommendations to make our family laws less adversarial and harmful for children, for example, could help thousands of families across Canada. Some of these changes were recommended by the Senate more than a decade ago but have never been implemented. Youth employment, skill development and fair treatment for foreign workers need attention to ensure that everyone shares in the economic recovery.

Action on any one of these issues would bring more
See Taxpayers on p.3

Column

Christ @ Culture

Lloyd Rang

Nomophobia



I was looking at my iPhone, when it hit me.

The ground, that is.

In the butt, to be precise.

I was walking along the walls of Fort Henry in Kingston. In the middle of texting with my friend, I walked straight into a hole and hit the ground like a sack of wet cement. Naturally, I did what any man in that situation would do: I bounced up, muttered "I meant to do that," and looked around to see if anyone had seen – or, worse – recorded the incident.

I was lucky. That time. But if you Google "falls with phone" you'll find others who weren't so lucky. There's the video of a Chinese girl who blundered into a sinkhole, the one of a woman who walked into a fountain in a mall and a man who fell right into the path of an oncoming train. Those videos strike a little close to home for my liking. People who know my phone habits will tell you – it's only a matter of time before "Tall man walks off short pier" becomes a YouTube hit.

That's because I can't put my phone down for very long without suffering withdrawal symptoms. I blame it on my former job. I worked in politics for over a decade, and had

to spring into action at a moment's notice at all hours of the day. So it's no wonder my response to a buzzing cell phone is instant, and Pavlovian: no matter what I am doing, where I am, or who I am with, I pick up the phone.

It's an addiction that my son noticed from a very early age. One of his first full sentences was "Daddy, can you please put down your Blackberry and play with me?" (a sentiment so heart-wrenching I did exactly that for at least five minutes). Now that he's a little older – and a lot more sarcastic – these days he just refers to my phone as "My Precious," using his best Gollum voice.

Psychologists studying cell-phone addiction say it's a real problem, and a growing one. A 2012 study by Paul Atchley and Amelia Warden in the *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition* found that university-aged students

were so attached to their phones that not even bribing them prevented them from immediately responding to texts from friends. Looking at all the classic signs of addiction – such as withdrawal (getting agitated when the Precious

is taken away), abandoning other activities (not playing with your child) and ignoring risks (falling down a hole, say) – it's less clear whether we're holding our phones



or they're holding us. We seem mortally afraid of not getting information instantly. This fear of being out of contact even has a name: nomophobia.

iPhone prayer

Scientists are researching the factors behind this powerful new addiction. For example, one study from Baylor and Seaton Hall Universities suggests that cell phone addiction may be related to the same impulsive urges that drive materialism and compulsive shopping. Whatever the cause, the effect is clear: a survey by *Time* magazine last year showed that 84 percent of Americans feel they couldn't be without their phone for a single day.

But if we're all in the same

boat, what's the problem?

Well, if you've ever seen a stream of pedestrians shuffling together, eyes down, looking like extras from *The Walking Dead*, or if you've ever been in a restaurant with friends where people directly across the table from one another are texting rather than talking, you may realize the scope of the problem. Too many of us have our heads down in what I call the iPhone prayer – and too few of us have our heads up, looking at one another – thoughtfully listening to one another, and looking into each other's eyes.

Part of this is natural, I think. With any innovation, there's always a lag between the introduction of the technology and the social rules around it. Think back to the early days of radio – the whole family would sit silently, gathered near the set. Eventually, that changed and the radio became background noise with life going on around it.

So it is with cell phone etiquette.

The backlash against addiction and rude behaviour is already beginning.

One of my colleagues and her friends have a rule: if they're out together, they can have a cell-phone break once every 15 minutes. But for the remainder of time the phones stay in purses or holstered.

Another colleague has an even stricter rule – if she's out to dinner with her friends, they put the phones in a stack in the centre of the table. The first person to reach for their phone picks up the tab for the rest of the group. This horrifies me. I know if I suggested that plan to my friends three things would happen: 1) I'd go out more often; 2) My friends would order really great food, and 3) my credit card would melt.

I'm sure that over time, we will develop a greater sense of self control and civility when it comes to our phones. And I'm confident that, particularly when we're spending time with close friends and family, we will get smarter about how we use our smart phones.

In the meantime, though, it's probably helpful to ask ourselves some tough questions about how we use our phones – and whether or not our Facebook friends and Twitter followers far away should really be more important than the flesh and blood people sitting right in front of us. Ultimately, I think we can all agree that ignoring a nearby person in favour of a remote person is just rude.

If we really think about it, we all know that, sooner or later, there is a cost to ignoring the people around us. In the end, paying a restaurant bill could seem like a small price next to the loss of actual friends, real relationships and the warmth of true human companionship. ✂

Lloyd Rang lives in Bowmanville, Ont.

We are more than taxpayers *continued*

benefit than any changes likely to result from the Senate scandal. And ignoring them – while we feed on personal exposé – also erodes the health of our democracy in Canada.

Political literacy

Using public money for personal gain is a breach of ethical behaviour by political leaders. It is a bare minimum standard of ethics, much too narrow by Christian standards. I worry about the erosion of our ethical standards when credible evidence that Canadian officials approved the use of torture and documented evidence of discrimination against aboriginal children do not elicit cries of ethical wrongdoing, but an expensive glass of orange juice on a Minister's expense sheet becomes headlines. Is it because we

can easily relate to the latter and it takes time to understand foreign policy or aboriginal issues?

Political literacy is essential for a well-functioning democracy. In time, the dumbing down of public discussion, from the media to coffee table talk, creates the context for manipulation of an ill-informed public by power-hungry politicians who are not motivated by the common good.

Similarly, as a taxpayer I am upset when tax dollars are used for the personal benefit of public leaders. When that becomes the primary focus of public debate, however, it can shrink our understanding of ethics and our role as citizens. Ethics are also involved when public funds are used to promote the sale of asbestos to developing countries or to pur-

chase expensive military planes of limited use while saying we can't afford to educate aboriginal children. Those choices receive less attention because they are buried in budgets and don't carry the label of "scandal."

Citizenship is more than paying taxes. It means taking an active role in shaping our society. Responsible citizenship includes public vigilance to prevent scandals of the kind that dominate our news right now. Even greater attention, however, should be given to public policy choices that shape our future but receive little media attention. ✂

Kathy Vandergrift, a policy analyst in Ottawa, teaches public ethics, but not to MPs.



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Editorials

Divestiture



James C. Schaap

Not long ago, Stanley Fish, one of the most prolific, thoughtful and entertaining literary critics and lit profs in the States, announced to the world (via his regular column in the *NY Times*) that because he's now retiring, he'd sold his books. English profs amass huge libraries, of course, not only because books are (or have been) their stock-in-trade, but because they get free ones. Besides, we can write 'em off. Huge libraries.

It would be interesting to know how much I've spent on books through the years – a staggering amount, I'm sure.

The truth is, I could sleuth it out by going through our tax records, but I think I'd rather not know. What I do know is that a year ago now I gave dozens of books away to students, then stood tons more on the for-sale shelf in the English department, charging a quarter a piece, more or less, mostly less. When that ploy failed to clean me out, I dumped the remainder in the book bins the library annually distributes around campus to catch the myriad rejects of students and profs alike, thousands of them.

Stanley Fish claims to have been amazed by how very easy it was for him, finally, to divest. "In the hours and days following the exodus of the books I monitored myself for a post-mortem (please excuse the hyperbole) reaction," he wrote. "Would I feel regret? Nostalgia? Panic? Relief? I felt nothing."

Not until I read that line did I think about my own divestiture just last year. That which had been my life got rather quickly and cleanly run right out of Dodge. Don't misunderstand – there are a dozen boxes upstairs waiting anxiously to be re-shelved when we move. But compared with the sheer bulk I had – and what we had – the refurbished Schaap library is almost anorexic.

Life after

Now there's a moral waiting to be mined from the sea change. Let me try that again with more to-the-point (and less mixed) metaphor: there's a moral to be discovered between the covers of the Fish ob-

servations. That moral is here too when an esteemed critic quotes a colleague of his as saying that leaving the office on the last day was no more traumatic than checking out of a motel.

Honestly, so it was with me too. That friend of Fish isn't wrong.

Let me pitch it this way. Among my people, I think I'm considered to be something of a liberal – you know, Obama and all of that. But the fact is, I'm an unabashed conservative. Listen to this: I've been in the same denomination for all of my 65 years. What's more, I stayed with the very same educational institution for my entire college-teaching career. How many people do you know in any job who are that blasted stodgy, that "I-shall-not-be-moved?"

These days, demographers and sociologists claim that most people will change professions – not just jobs – five or six times during their working lives. I was never anything but an English prof. Good night, talk about *traditional, conventional, conformist!*

But no more. It is now one year since I (sort of) retired. Am I traumatized? I don't think so. Do I miss the blessed halls I haunted for all those years? Would I give anything to return to my sweet office?

No – and why should I? I cleaned everything off the walls – every trace of me.

In fact, I don't even feel much loyalty. I remember an older retired prof telling me gingerly, "Schaap, there's life after Dordt." Not that I didn't believe it. Still, I'm happy to report he was as prophetic as Ezekiel.

Onwards

At some secret place in the recesses of the mind or soul or spirit, there's likely a switch or two that controls the homage we give to our immediacy, probably a switch like those that, unseen, mysteriously light a room simply when you step inside. You know? – walk in and the world is lit; leave, and who really cares?

Stanley Fish says that he's been bountifully rewarded for that *NY Times* column because of the generous responses of his readers. Whereas he's quite regularly dissed for what he writes, this particular column – the one where he talked about dumping his books – generated far more light than heat. "The responses this time," he wrote a month later, "rather than being combative or angry, are reflective, generous, kind, eloquent, and, more than occasionally, wise."

I like that.

That generosity, I think, is understandable. My books are some carpenter's toolbox, some farmer's old John Deere, some cop's badge, some mother's kids' baby clothes. They are *what is* to each of us – or *what was*, and my *what was*, now that I'm retired, means less to me than *what is*.

We're building a new house. Maybe it's nuts for a couple of retirees, but it's a joy. I could never have imagined I would like it as much as I do, but then there was time I could never have imagined life without my books. We move on.

"Nobody's home," one of those responders told Stanley Fish. "We're all in exile."

Isn't that a great line? That's as fresh and thoughtful a way this old conservative has heard someone talk about heaven in a long, long time. ✎

James Calvin Schaap is professor emeritus at Dordt College. He is the author of over 20 books and blogs at siouxlander.blogspot.com.

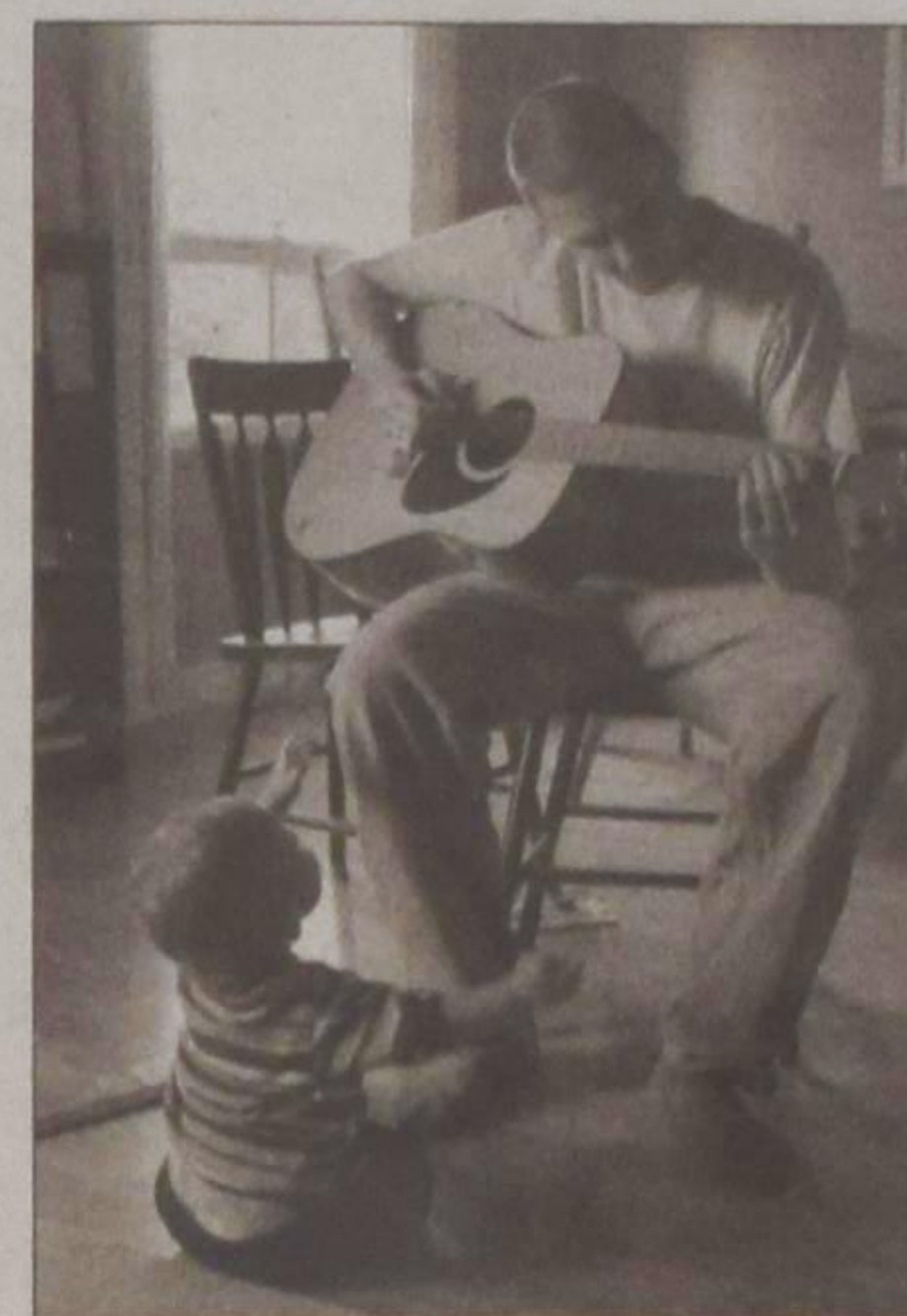
The council of dads



Angela Reitsma Bick

Do you ever watch young fathers at church? There's usually one dad managing to hold a coffee cup and a newborn, another with armloads of construction paper crafts and Sunday school pamphlets.

In the ebb and flow of reproductive rates, our home church in Barrie seems to be at high tide right now, and that means children everywhere – a hundred kids under 12, at last count. After the service, they run like wild things up and down the aisles and in between adult legs, until parents scoop up wriggling toddlers or corral the older ones. It's hard to have a complete conversation but so good to see a lively, intergenerational fellowship hall.



Kurt Strikwerda, a member of First CRC in Barrie, plays guitar for his son Jude.

And because my husband is one of them, I can tell you that these dads are involved in raising their young children. They change diapers. They play catch. They discipline, do dishes and put kids to bed. Contemporary dads take their turn in the church nursery, but they're also active in Council, Teen Club and Sunday School. It goes without saying that they have full-time jobs as well.

In other words, men are pursuing the same work/life balance as women without the publicity of the so-called "mommy wars." No one highlights the unique challenges of dads who experience personal conflict between work and family roles – not to mention church duties.

A recent *Washington Post* article called fatherhood "the new F-word." It's not a role that our culture values – after all, you won't get promotions or raises at work for hanging out with your kids. And unless it's Father's Day, you probably won't hear a sermon about fatherhood either. We all know that a father's influence is important – that it will shape his children's lives and faith for good or ill – but we don't discuss what that means for families today.

If a man has been blessed with children, what is his primary responsibility – to his child, church or career? And what does fatherhood mean to childless or single men?

While your family . . .

A great post on the CRC's Network entitled "Working for the church while your family dies" (August 2011) has stuck in my head for almost two years, maybe because the title comes from an Arcade Fire song. Melissa Van Dyk, its author, talks about the effect of sacrificing home time to complete diaconal tasks: "Unconsciously, I allowed the relationship with my family to 'die' while I did 'good' work at the church."

This raises an important question: Is it possible to over-commit to Kingdom work?

I think the answer is "yes" – for all parents, but particularly for dads, whose highest calling is to lead their families spiritually. A father is more than a role model for how to serve at church. He's more than a paycheck that provides for his family's physical needs – although the instinct to do so is not a bad thing; it is, in fact, God-given (cf. Gen 2:15). Kids need interested, strong, dependable and patient fathers who model God's love for us. Dads need church communities that affirm the importance of their calling as fathers, a job unique from motherhood. This might include support groups for fathers facing illness, encouraging local mission work as families, or older men mentoring fathers with teenagers. It should never include the pressure to do more and more "good" work at church while family life withers.

Men who could step in

When Bruce Feiler was diagnosed with cancer, his twin daughters were three years old. Sleepless with worry that they might have to grow up without him, he invites six male friends to look out for them in the event of his death. *The Council of Dads: My Daughters, My Illness*

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Canada

Letters

The wrong labels

I have two documents that concern the Christian Reformed Church sitting right here before my eyes – both about financial management. One is about an institution; the other about an individual.

In *Christian Courier* (June 24, 2013), we learn that several recently-retired Calvin College executives and the Board of Trustees have left Calvin College with a large deficit and the need for painful cost-cutting measures (less than Greece, but still painful).

In *Breaking Barriers*, we learn that Ralph Bus, one of the leaders in the CRC's Disabilities Concerns ministry, met his household needs – “including paying the bills, housekeeping, shoveling snow and changing light bulbs” – by becoming a landlord who “journeyed alongside” his renters.

Being a landlord may sound about as congruent to Christianity as being a capitalist in 19th century Russia. Ralph Bus, however, has given us a model of how Christianity can transform property and economic matters. He works with renters who receive reduced rent “in exchange” for “helping with housework.” More significantly, however, he transforms the landlord/tenant relationship into one in which sharing life goals and practising Biblical respect are part and parcel of this seemingly economic relationship.

Stewards

Two of our children received excellent education at Calvin College, which my wife and I still support financially. I read with dismay about the recent practices of Calvin College's financial affairs, practices which seemingly involved collecting money for projects, investing them (perhaps unwisely or imprudently) in hopes of increasing revenue, and then suffering the consequences of the world economic situation and/or imprudence or impropriety.

In conferences about creation care, I am often reminded that human beings are stewards or managers or vice-regents of creation. We are to care for, not exploit, the creation, I am told again and again. This is reflected in the Greek word sometimes spelled *oikonomos*, which means steward. Thus we are to care for creation as good housekeepers. The derived English word, *economy*, does not refer “merely” to financial things, but to our calling as human beings who are responsible to God (see Jesus' parables in

Luke 12:42, 16:1,3,8).

Well . . . but it *does* refer to financial things, because economics is an aspect of creational life. And here we run into a problem. For too many of us, economics does indeed mean money – money in isolation from ethics and our human vocation. It is the fault of too many of us – rich and poor – that we see our financial situation as occupying a trump card for decision making. We scream and protest over austerity measures or hire a new national bank manager to control our haywire financial institutions.

Implicated

Within the family of God, St. Paul exhorts us to “Owe nothing to anyone – except for your obligation to love one another.” What lies behind our endless desire to gain financially, to look good financially, to increasing our financial resources, to get the “most bang for our financial buck”?

Do we need more and bigger buildings for Calvin College or for our local congregation (or our country)? Although I am not calling into question *ipso facto* the size or cost of cathedrals or mega-churches or sports arenas or shopping centres, I am asking if a transformational vision of Christ's kingdom really lights the way.

A highly principled older friend of mine – upon learning about the Calvin College financial situation – remarked, “We are just like the big banks! First that business in California and now this!”

I couldn't argue.

I couldn't argue, but I can and do point to people like Ralph Bus, landlord.

I'm implicated in this whole matter by mental categorization. I thought, “Oh, here's an article about my friend Ralph and disabilities” and here's another about economics and finances. Ralph Bus combines financial management, personal goals, covenantal relationships, mutuality and respect in his landlord/tenant relationships.

I think we should reprint the articles in different journals. The Calvin College story could be in *Breaking Barriers*, a disabilities newsletter. The story about Mr. Bus could go in *The Banner's* “Reformed Matters” section; maybe it could be called “Reformed Christian Financial Stewardship in Action.”

Curt Gesch
Telkwa, B.C.

The council of dads *continued*

and the Men Who Could Be Me tells the story of Feiler's determination to provide his girls with strong father figures. Feiler tries to define what he thinks makes him a good dad, and then hunts for friends who embody those characteristics.

Not all the men he chooses are fathers themselves. It's an inspiring example of how men without biological children can experience fatherhood. In a June 7 sermon, Pope Francis said essentially the same thing. Fatherhood is more than giving life to others; it's also “pastoral paternity, spiritual fatherhood.” That's a role he embraces for Catholics all over the world. Uncles, mentors, Cadet Counselors and Big Brothers all practise fatherhood in healthy ways outside of the primary family unit.

Prince William may be the most famous new father in the world right now. He will soon, like most contemporary dads, figure out how to balance his new role with the rest of his obligations. Media eagerly reported that William changed the baby's first diaper, predicting that this means he'll be a “hands-on dad.” Maybe the royal father will set a new trend and make fatherhood matter again, or at least rescue it from the realm of f-words.

Meanwhile, the original council of dads at church will continue to juggle coffee cups and babies, committee meetings and soccer games. May God draw these dads closer to himself, and foster new relationships between kids who need a father figure and godly men ready to step up. ✂

Angela Reitsma Bick is married to Allan – a wonderful father. When she asked their 22-month-old son which friend he wanted to play with today, he said “Daddy.”

Calvin College's financial crisis Further disclosure needed

I appreciated your coverage of Calvin College's financial situation (June 24, 2013). Dr. Wolterstorff skates around the issues a bit by outlining the “possibilities” (“Regret, apology, forgiveness and reconciliation”). I am not sure I understand his distinction between “morally culpable” (deserving to be blamed or considered responsible for something bad) and “morally irresponsible” (not thinking carefully enough or not caring about what might result from actions taken). Also, blaming the accounting system “that didn't catch the problem sooner” is a cop out. As a multimillion dollar organization with CPAs (USA) or CAs (CDN) at all levels, including staff and Board, that is hard to fathom.

John Tamming (“Dancing with the Lehman brothers”) is much closer to the mark. He puts a timeline on the issue that eliminates the economic problems of 2007-2009. His legal mind follows the actions of the people involved.

During a career as a banker (1962-2002 in Holland and Canada), I managed risks of all kinds. I learned from my older mentors in the bank in Holland – lawyers, professors and economists – that the funds entrusted to the bank were earned by our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. I was overwhelmed by the number of folks who had signed off on a credit. And those were the days when accounting was done by hand. Credit applications from branches in Karachi, Bayreuth, Bombay (Mumbai), Osaka and 25 other places around the globe took at least two weeks to review at Head Office in Amsterdam.

That mindset of entrustment has never left me. No matter how complicated and convoluted the accounting systems and products became I always wanted to know, in the case of loans, how we got our money back, and in the case of deposits (and other now fancy instruments) how we could be trusted to repay the depositor. Today that is called “risk management.” I did it intuitively and I suspect

my Calvinist heritage played a role. That perspective is little used today. But then finance has been made much more complicated by (many but not all) those who see in it a fast buck for themselves.

I highly recommend a book called *The Prey* by Jost Smit, which chronicles the demise of the Dutch banking system (and subsequent havoc on the English, Spanish and U.S. financials).

How did we get here?

This brings me to the corporate CRCNA and the \$370 million it has invested in banks, managed by portfolio managers who are probably very much like Gaylen Byker. Who is watching those folks? Does the BOT have the skills to manage this? Do CRCNA internal controls work properly? Does the CRCNA have a responsibility for Calvin College's financials? The CRCNA certainly played a big role in the financial statements of Back to God Ministries International when I was their Treasurer for five years. Where were Calvin College's auditors? Or did they cover themselves in the fine print “notes to the financial statements” that no one on the Calvin Board or BOT bothered to read (or understand)?

Two years ago the BOT made changes to the pension plan for pastors and decreased benefits and charged the congregations more to cover pension plan shortfalls. At the time I wrote to the CRCNA head office and pointed out that the church (corporate) had surpluses (including at Calvin College) that should be applied to the pension plan shortfall and not cut benefits to pastors and increase the burden to the (declining) members in the pew. Well, we have our answer to that in this debacle.

I support a call for full disclosure, even if we have to appoint a Canadian Royal Commission (CRC) to get to the bottom of this. I am even sure we could find some retired accountants and lawyers (even a banker?) to do this *pro bono*.

Harry Boessenkool
Surrey, B.C.

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News

Canada-focused CRC study says opinions on justice vary

Marian Van Til, with files from CRCNA

BURLINGTON, Ont. (CRCNA) – The Christian Reformed Church in North America officially says that Christians must pursue “God’s justice and peace in every area of life,” but the ways in which church members understand and live out justice vary considerably, according to the church leaders who were participants in the survey.

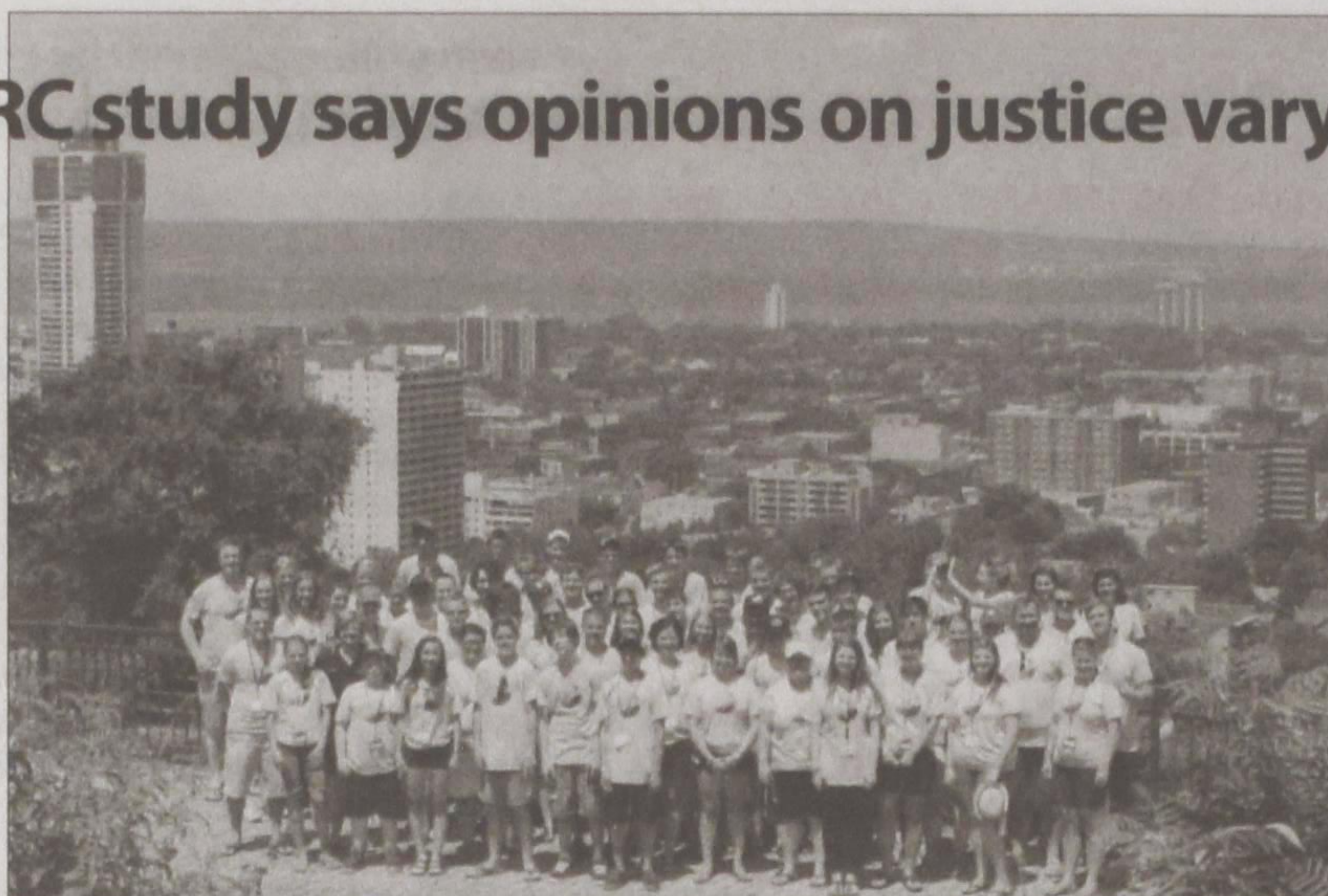
That was one of the results of a pilot project called “Justice and Faith: Mobilizing Christian Reformed Church Congregations for Justice.” Conducted over the last half-year, the project focused on discovering how issues of justice play out for CRC members in Canada. It did that by interviewing church and agency leaders, not by surveying regular church members. The exception to that was the conducting of four small focus group (four to seven people each) consisting of “a mix of congregational and lay leaders” from Kitchener and Oakville, Ontario; Calgary; and Milford, Nova Scotia (a fifth group, in Abbotsford, B.C., had to be canceled).

‘Advance justice-mobilization efforts’

The project’s purpose was to advance the CRC’s “justice-mobilization efforts,” encouraging CRC members and congregations to embrace justice as an integral aspect of Christian mission, vocation and discipleship, said those conducting the study.

The study explained its approach as “community-based research,” whose hallmarks “include being community-situated, participatory and action-oriented.” That approach meant that “a network of CRC leaders participated in project development and was regularly informed about project progress. Information was gotten from research participants who held diverse stakeholder perspectives within the CRC.” That means that the project “involved the collaboration of various CRC agencies, ministries and local leaders, the Centre for Philosophy, Religion and Social Ethics and the Centre for Community Based Research (CCBR).”

The participation of those “stakeholders” was obtained via 14 telephone interviews with local, regional and denominational leaders in the CRC. “Key informants were selected who could reflect on the perspectives and actions of others within the CRC, providing a ‘balcony view’ of perspectives on God’s call to do justice within the CRC,” said the study. Those “key informants” were chosen for their “range in leadership positions within the CRC, geographic location



Youth from CRC churches across Canada pursued justice on SERVE mission trips this summer.



Four church groups worked together in Hamilton (above), including youth from Rehoboth CRC in Bowmanville (below).

across Canada, ethno-racial background, age, socioeconomic status and gender.”

In addition, four focus groups of four to seven people (23 in all) were held. Those places were chosen to include both urban and rural perspectives.

‘View on the ground’ differs from church’s view

The study first researched existing CRC documents that would yield a picture of the denomination’s view of justice. These revealed a generally consistent view of justice as “integral to the life and mission of the church.” The “view on the ground,” as reported by the CRC leaders who participated in the study, was, in contrast, “wide-ranging.”

The interviews revealed “divergent opinions about what justice means,” said the study. “Most notable were the continuums [sic] of understanding justice as “restoration and renewal” versus “retribu-

tion and judgment,” and “undoing systemic barriers” versus “alleviating individual need.” It became clear in the interviews and focus groups that these continuums [sic] framed much of the popular understandings of justice, with most individuals found somewhere between these polar positions,” said the study.

The church-leader participants said that they felt that a majority of Canadian CRC members would understand justice to be a “second-tier concern,” something that God calls them to but that is less important than other aspects of Christian living. “One key informant described most CRC congregants as ‘not [having] a personal engagement in [justice],’ reported the study. “Nonetheless, participants noted that justice was still selectively integrated into Christian living for people of this disposition, with other aspects of Christian living being prioritized over the pursuit of justice.”

The leaders felt that a smaller proportion would see justice as a central concern of Christian faith and life; still others would see justice as a peripheral concern for Christians. This pilot is part of a larger, two-year research project on the topic of justice and faith in the CRC, which will continue until June 2015.

More info

Additional information about the study can be obtained from Steve van de Hoef, who was a co-leader of the project and serves as the CRC’s justice and reconciliation mobilizer in Canada (email: svandehoef@crcna.org; or phone: 800-730-3490). The complete study is available online at crcna.org/CanadianMinistries.

The project addressed three questions:

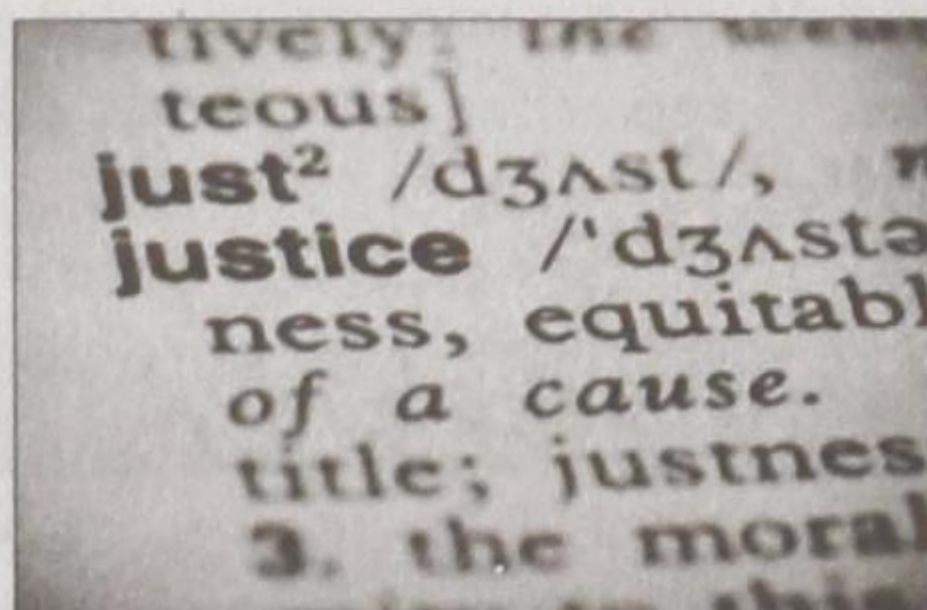
1. How and to what extent are CRC people [at present] engaging in matters of justice?
2. What is enabling and what is preventing CRC people from pursuing justice?
3. What strategies would help CRC people to further engage in doing justice?

Among the findings of the pilot project:

- * A biblical vision of justice was seen to be essential for understanding and responding to God’s call to do justice.
- * A wide variety of activities were described as “doing justice,” from volunteering in soup kitchens to deepening relationships within the community to engaging in political advocacy.
- * Several barriers to doing justice were identified, including being sheltered from the reality or effects of injustice, a lack of knowledge about justice issues or how to respond to injustice, a lack of consistent language and approach within the denomination, and a lack of agreement or ability to work together, both within and between congregations.

In partnership with the Centre for Philosophy, Religion and Social Ethics and the Centre for Community Based Research, the CRC has been awarded a Partnership Development Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

This grant will help fund a larger, action-research project on the topic of justice and faith in the CRC.



Is justice a second-tier concern?



Justice and Faith: Mobilizing Christian Reformed Church Congregations for Justice

News

Britain: BBC religious programming drops 20 percent in one year



LONDON (TCI) – The British Broadcasting Corporation's religion-related programming has fallen by 20 percent in one year, according to its latest annual report.

One secularist group welcomed the figures, claiming audiences see religion as unimportant. But a recent BBC Trust report highlighted as the cause a lack of knowledge about religion among some BBC staff.

Across the BBC's TV and Radio stations, religious programs amounted to 1,126 hours in the 2012-13 period, down from 1,393 in 2011-12. Religious output on BBC One decreased by just three percent, whereas overall radio content fell by a fifth. And on digital channel BBC Four, the number of hours devoted to religious programs dropped from 53 hours to five. The figures were collected for the BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2012-13.

Terry Sanderson, president of the National Secular Society said in response to the figures, "It is good that the BBC is taking notice of its audiences at last – who according to its own research don't regard religion as an important genre and hardly ever watch it."

In July a BBC presenter said Christians who oppose gay marriage are being treated as "throwbacks" by the BBC's journalists. Roger Bolton also said that if the BBC interviews a Christian who objects to abortion on religious grounds, "they are treated as though they are just a bit barny."

Bolton was taking part in an official BBC Trust review of the breadth of opinion in the broadcaster's output on various issues, including religion.

The report noted that Christians frequently complain that the BBC tip-toes around the sensitivities of Islam, but happily mocks Christianity. ✂

Russian Orthodox leader: West moving towards secularist totalitarianism

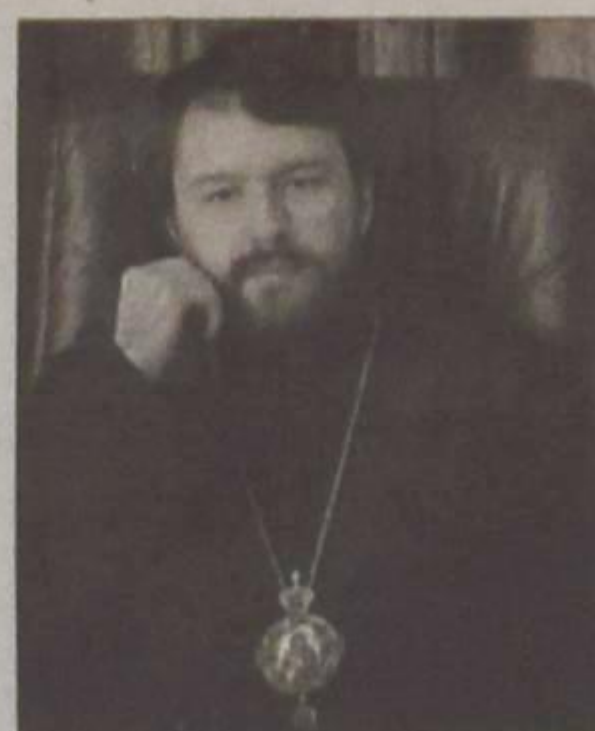
MOSCOW (CWN) – The Russian Orthodox Church's chief ecumenical official has said that "secularization in the guise of democratization" is leading Western nations toward totalitarianism.

Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev made the assertion in an article in *Pravoslavnyaya Beseda* magazine.

The metropolitan said that modern states "set a principle of secularity," wanting independence from "any outside authority that is authorized to point out violations of morals or rights." The people themselves, not God, are declared the only source of authority in a democratic state.

"This powerful energy today strives to finally break with Christianity, which controlled its totalitarian impulses during 17 centuries," the metropolitan wrote. "Eventually, it unconsciously strives to set up an absolute dictatorship that demands total control over each member of society. Don't we move to it when 'for the sake of security' we agree to obligatory electronic passports, dactyloscopy [fingerprint identification] for everyone, and photo cameras occurring everywhere?"

Hilarion observed that the "free will of citizens is a preconditioned, not absolute, characteristic of a democratic state. For example, two European states, Great Britain and France, have recently legalized unisex marriages. For a time after the parliament approved this law, France has become a stage for protest demonstrations with millions of people participating. However, the state consciously and demonstratively ignored demands of people and used tear gas to disperse them." Hilarion criticized the efforts "to make immorality normal." ✂



Alfeyev.

Young Canadian Catholics recount the blessings of World Youth Day

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil (CNA/EWTN) – A group of young Canadian Catholics says this year's World Youth Day has made them feel "more united" than at previous events. And not only that, "it was more fun."

World Youth Day (WYD) is a triennial event that brings together Roman Catholic youth from around the world. It is sponsored by the Roman Catholic Church and features the participation of the Pope in teaching and leading masses. It was initiated by John Paul II in 1985.

"There are always little differences in all of the Youth Days, but I find that in this particularly, there's a lot more of a sense of communion," said Christina Brine from Winnipeg, while the event was still going on. "It doesn't matter what language you speak, you're able to communicate, especially with the Brazilians because they're so welcoming."

This was Brine's fourth WYD. She participated in previous gatherings in Toronto, Cologne and Sydney. The people of Rio have great enthusiasm for visitors – and seemingly for Canadians, she said. "When Brazilian pilgrims see the Canadian flag, they shout 'Ca-na-da!' and then it's just a chant of 'Ca-na-da!' all the way until they disappear down the street."

Brine emphasized that at every World Youth Day she loves seeing people's faces light up as they experience the event for the very first time. Brine believes that Pope Francis "will be one of those that talks from his heart and will be able to communicate with generations now." She said one of the things she likes best at the world's largest Catholic youth gathering is the catechesis sessions that take place over three days. "I was really touched by the Lord in Sydney," she revealed, "so this is just a building on from that."

This year's WYD theme was "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19).

Brine believes that youth have left the Catholic Church because of secular pressures, but that events like World Youth Day bring people back.

A friend of Brine's, Jennifer Cooke, is a 34-year-old school counselor from Winnipeg. The Rio WYD was her second. "They were amazing experiences," Cooke said. "The opening Mass gave me such a sense of awe that we're



Millions of youth gather at Copacabana Beach for mass on July 23.

all here together and it really does give that sense of connection to one another as part of a Christian community."

Cooke has come to this World Youth Day to strengthen and continue to grow in her faith as well as to embrace "the theme of going to the world and serving it as Christ's disciple," she said. "My hope is that the theme will emphasize the need of the church to be the agent of social justice and of change in that area for Brazil."

Organizers prepared young people for World Youth Day with a "mission week" from July 17 to 20 across different regions of Brazil. They aimed to give young people the chance to participate in spiritual activities, works of solidarity with local communities and missionary and cultural events.

Concerning Pope Francis, Cooke emphasized that she is "definitely looking forward to meeting him" and that she is "touched that he comes from the global south." She added, "I think that him being from the southern hemisphere will bring a new approach to the papacy and hopefully really renew the fire for social justice." ✂

Global study: Atheism is in decline worldwide

SOUTH HAMILTON, Mass. (CNS) – Atheism is in decline worldwide, with the number of atheists falling from 4.5 percent of the world's population in 1970 to 2.0 percent in 2010, and projected to drop to 1.8 percent by 2020, according to a new report by the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at the evangelical Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts.

In the report, "Christianity in Its Global Context, 1970-2020: Society, Religion, and Mission," researchers analyzed data on church membership and activities from thousands of Christian denominations and other religions worldwide, presenting that data from 1970 and 2010 for a 40-year comparison. The information and related demographic data was used to forecast the world religious makeup in 2020.

The numbers show that in 1970 there were 165,500,000 atheists worldwide, about 4.5 percent of the global population. In 2010, the number of atheists had fallen to just two percent of the world's population. The drop in atheists "is due primarily to the resurgence of Buddhism, Christianity and other religions in China, and Christianity in Eastern Europe," says the report.

Atheism rising in West, dropping elsewhere

"If this trend continues, agnostics and atheists will be a smaller portion of the world's population in 2020 than they were in 2010," says the study – an estimated 1.8 percent of the world's population.

"Although the number of atheists and agnostics contin-

ues to rise in the Western world, the current growth of a variety of religions in China in particular (where the vast majority of the 'non-religious' live today) suggests continued future demographic growth of religion."

"From the point of view of 1970-2010, there has been a global religious resurgence, and it seems likely to continue into the future," reports the study. In reference to agnostics, the data show they constituted 15 percent of the world's population in 1970 but declined to 10 percent of the population in 2010; they are projected to fall further by 2020, to make up 9 percent of the worldwide population.

Commenting on the study, Bill Donohue, president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, said that much of the decrease for atheists is attributable to the demise of atheistic communism. "The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to a spike in religious affiliation, both in Russia and in Eastern Europe," as the study documents, and "China is also in the throes of a religious revival."

Citing the data from the report, Donohue noted that "Russia was 38 percent Christian in 1970 and in 2010 the number jumped to 71 percent. The world's first officially atheistic state, Albania, is now 63 percent Muslim and 32 percent Christian."

"Two religions, Christianity and Islam, dominate religious demographics and seem poised to continue that dominance in the future," reads the study. "In 1970 those two religions together represented 48 percent of the global population, and by 2020 they will likely represent 57 percent." ✂

Column/Review

Technically Speaking

Derek Schuurman



Nothing is neutral

The electric vehicle option



In the early 1990's, my first job out of school as an electrical engineer was with a company that designed electronic controllers for industrial electric vehicles, such as forklifts and mining vehicles. As an engineer designing electric drives, I developed a keen interest in electric vehicles (EVs). I later returned to graduate school and completed a masters thesis dealing with an EV application. I had an opportunity to attend some international EV symposiums where I met other engineers and enthusiasts and gazed on many of the latest developments in EV technology. I had a sense that the area of EV research and design was a clear example of responsible technology that would dramatically reduce pollution and help save the planet.

Almost two decades later there are now several commercial EVs available, including the Chevy Volt, the Nissan Leaf, the plug-in Toyota Prius and the Tesla Roadster. Even Arnold Schwarzenegger is driving a "green Hummer" (two words that look strange next to each other). Many politicians, companies and environmentalists are proclaiming the merits of the EV. Referring to the all-electric Tesla Roadster, London mayor Boris Johnson quipped it produced "no more noxious vapors than a dandelion in an alpine meadow." Some governments have begun providing subsidies and incentives to encourage people to begin purchasing EVs.



A (younger) Derek tests the EV1, an electric car manufactured by GM in the mid-90s.

Manufacturing costs

But some articles are highlighting the fact that EVs have a far bigger environmental impact than dandelions in alpine meadows. People have long recognized that the power used to charge EVs is not necessarily clean, especially in regions that still rely heavily on coal-powered generating plants. But some go even further in their critique of EVs. The July issue of *IEEE Spectrum* published an article by Ozzie Zehner with the provocative title "Unclean at Any Speed: Electric Cars Don't Solve the Automobile's Environmental Problems." In it, he suggests that "electrifying cars just trades one set of environmental problems for another." He explains that "most electric-car assessments fail to consider the environmental impacts over a vehicle's entire life cycle, from its construction through operation and on to its eventual retirement at the junkyard." Just because EVs have no tailpipe does not mean there is no environment impact.

Zehner cites a 2010 study by the National Academies that found operating an EV was less damaging than a gas-powered one, but a full life-cycle analysis reveals that manufacturing EVs involves several energy intensive processes. Electric drive motors rely on rare-earth magnets, which are often supplied from places with poorer mining practices. Batteries contain toxic substances and also require substantial energy to manufacture and properly recycle. The report came to the startling conclusion that over the lifetime of an electric vehicle, its health and environmental damages (excluding climatic effects) were *greater* than those of gasoline-powered cars! In his article, Zehner makes the provocative statement that moving from gas-powered vehicles to EVs might be "like shifting from one brand of cigarettes to another."

Shifting gears

Many would dispute Zehner's claims; there are many studies have come to different conclusions. I think some of Zehner's statements are extreme and provocative, but it's a good reminder that there is no "silver bullet." Although there are more responsible forms of technology, all technology suffers from the "thorns and thistles" of the fall.

As the power grid moves to cleaner forms of power, EVs will provide one pathway to reduce greenhouse gases. There are also many remaining challenges that EVs face including expensive batteries and limited driving range (although gas generators can extend that). Furthermore, charging batteries can take considerable time, and the infrastructure for charging stations are not widely available.

The main issue is that we are addicted to the automobile, and there is no magical technological solution to make the impact of driving like a "dandelion in an alpine meadow." In his article, Zehner suggests that we should look beyond EVs as the solution, and consider alternatives to the automobile such as bike lanes. EVs are a good step forward, but automobiles, no matter how they are powered, are not neutral. While we pursue improvements to automobile technology, we must also rethink the structures that determine how we live and move about in our cities and communities.

Derek Schuurman is an associate professor of computer science at Redeemer University College. Someday he would like to drive an electric vehicle.

An honest and hopeful account of the challenge of motherhood

Sara Gerritsma DeMoor

According to a 2008 survey of American women, "Seventy five percent of females aged 25 to 45 exhibit disordered eating behaviours . . . 67 percent of women . . . are trying to lose weight." Women in this age bracket are also the ones most likely to be undergoing the body-altering changes that tend to accompany bearing and raising children. What effect does this convergence of body-image struggles with pregnancy and parenthood have on women's emotional, physical and spiritual well-being? How can women build self-confidence, improve their body-image, and become better mothers in the process?

A new book released in May 2013 aims to address these questions and more. Co-authored by Emily T. Weirenga, a mother of two boys and a recovered anorexic (and *Christian Courier* columnist), and Dr. Dena Cabrera, a mother of two and a licensed clinical psychologist and certified eating disorder specialist, *Mom in the Mirror: Body Image, Beauty, and Life After Pregnancy* claims to be "a physical, mental, emotional and spiritual response to a female generation seeking its true identity in an appearance-based world." Though the title implies that this book is only for new mothers struggling with body-image and baby-weight issues, the wide variety of topics addressed by this book make it a useful read for women of all ages and life stages. (In fact, I often found myself imagining that it might be even more eye-opening for men to read and engage with the reflections in *Mom in the Mirror*, perhaps enabling them to better encourage and support the women in their lives by reading a "first-hand" account of some of the challenges and opportunities that motherhood presents to women's sense of self and body-image.) With honesty and gentleness, the authors reflect on topics such as baggage from one's past; the overlapping identities of women as an individual, wife and mother; anxiety, control and perfectionism; and challenges of parenting through various stages of childhood, always through the lens of our identities as children of God. Some chapters focus exclusively on countering negative body-images, frantic weight-loss attempts, and specific concerns facing women in an image-obsessed culture.

Although the topics discussed do have a broad appeal, *Mom in the Mirror* is intentionally addressing the joys and struggles of motherhood, with helpful chapters for mothers of all stages: from newborns to toddlers, teenagers to adult children. Not every chapter will speak directly to every reader, but the tone and style of writing made this book resonate with me on a number of levels.

In fact, I was surprised by my reaction to *Mom in the Mirror*. Typically skeptical about the "self-help" genre in general and the Christian version in particular, I expected to be inundated with simplistic advice and essentializing generalizations about women and men. While there were some generalizations that irritated me ("Deep down, most men want to be a hero. . . . Women, for the most part, want to be cherished and nurtured, to know they are taken care of"), the overall tone of the book was helpful, especially considering its intended audience. Dieting and body-image issues are symptoms of deeper concerns that need to be addressed so that we can be free to fully love God and ourselves – and our families as ourselves. What gives *Mom in the Mirror* a broad appeal beyond a basic "self-help" book for weight-concerned new moms are both the personal stories from the authors and the sections for "reflection" and "tools" at the end of each chapter. The authors reveal parts of their own journeys of faith and motherhood as they dig into the layers that hide beneath eating disorders and self-hatred, speaking from their experiences of anxiety and perfectionism, experiencing grace, and learning to accept and love the broken and the hard places in ourselves and our lives. These stories, honestly written and disarmingly poetic, keep the message from feeling formulaic, or simplistically "self-help-y." The questions for reflection and tools for moving forward prompted me to journal on my own and to initiate interesting conversations with my husband: "Who do you, consciously or subconsciously, blame for your war wounds?" "How does your bruised soul effect the way you mother your children?" "Do you tend to despise or accept your reflection [in the mirror]?" "How has motherhood lived up to your expectations, and how has it shattered them?"

As a new mother, having welcomed our first son into our family in August 2012, *Mom in the Mirror* helped me work through some questions that had already been percolating for me, about a "mom culture" that demands perfection while undermining confidence, my questioning every decision and about how I can encourage faith, confidence and generosity in my growing son when I am daily reminded of my own doubt, fears and self-criticism. One of my life-long struggles has been that I am plagued by feeling I am never good enough, not complete enough, to adequately take on the challenges that I face or to feel content with my accomplishments. Taking a page from *Mom in the Mirror*, I will choose to respond to myself as I respond to my child: with grace instead of condemnation, with love instead of harsh critique. I will choose to believe that I am doing the best I can, and rely on the grace of Christ to do the rest.

Sara is currently enjoying the last month of her one-year maternity leave, and looks forward to returning to part-time employment as a campus chaplain at the Christian Reformed Campus Ministry at the University of Toronto in the fall. When she has time, Sara enjoys cooking, reading and breathing deeply.



Mom in the Mirror: Body Image, Beauty, and Life After Pregnancy
Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 242 pages.

Reviews

Some great summer reads for kids

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

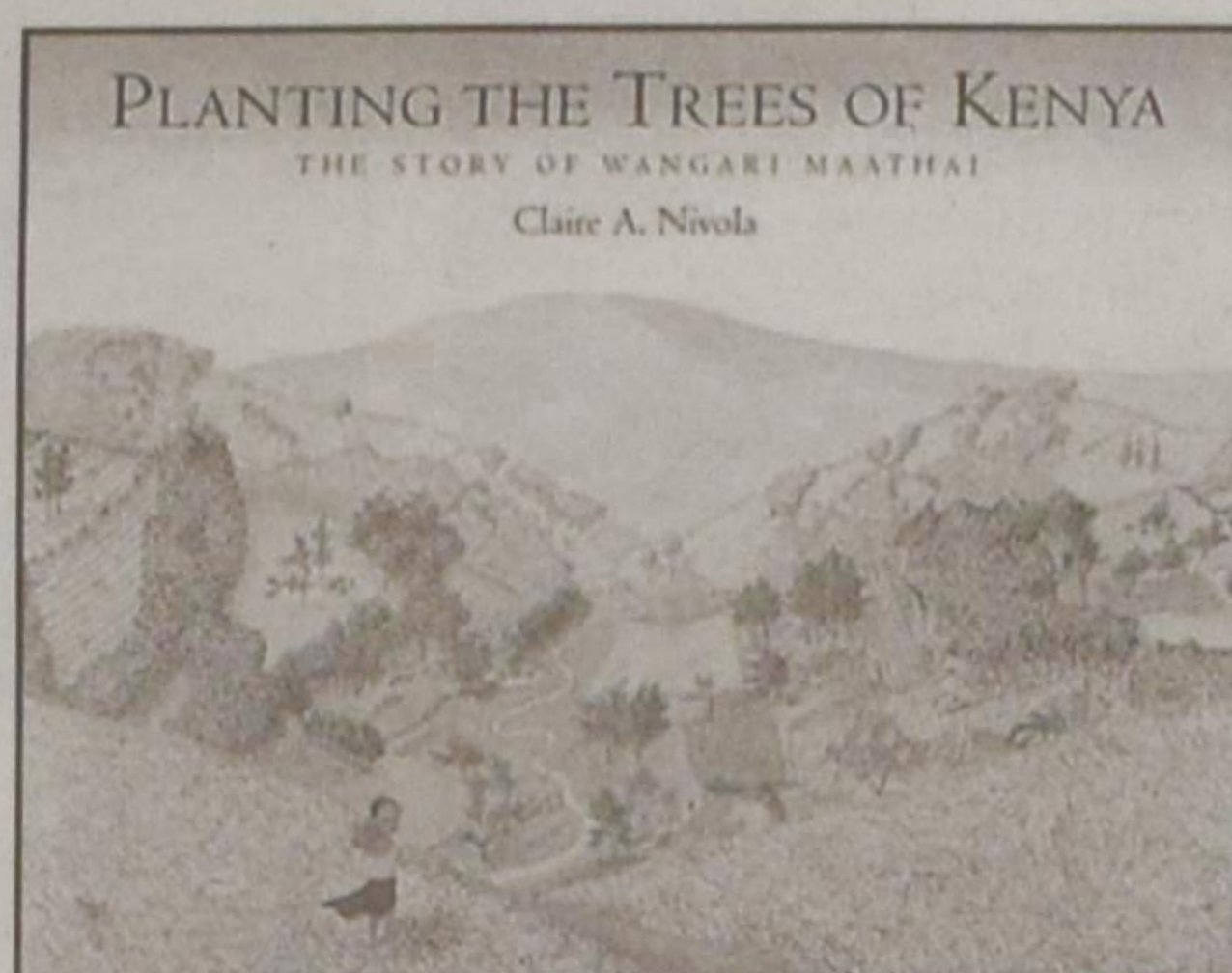
Growing up in Kenya in the 1940s, Wangari Maathai learned to respect nature and care for it. At that time, the land was still productive and farmers of small plots lived off the food they grew.

As a teenager, Wangari left Kenya to attend Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas, where she studied biology. While there, nuns taught her "to think not just of herself but of the world beyond herself."

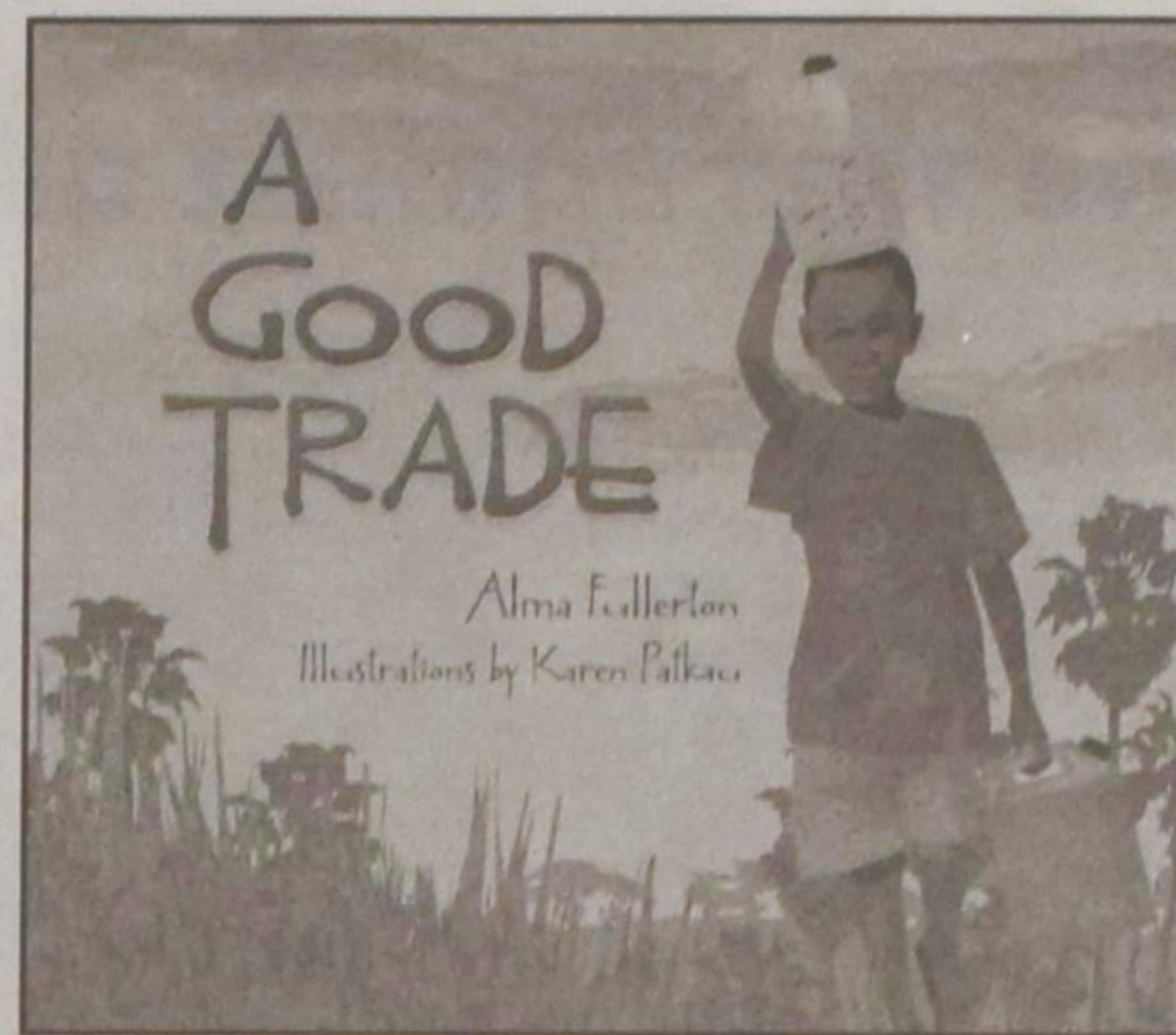
Five years later, Wangari returned to Kenya. She noticed that its landscape was drastically altered. The land was almost devoid of trees. Wangari understood the ramifications of this change not only for the environment, but also for the well-being of the people. Slowly but surely, she mobilized Kenyan women and taught them to take seeds from the remaining trees, plant them and nurture them to maturity. The men, who had been sceptical at first, soon also joined them. Thus, Wangari became the founder of the Green Belt Movement. In 30 years, 30 million trees have been planted in Kenya.

Wangari is the winner of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize, and serves as a role model to all children.

Vibrant illustrations of magnificent landscapes and brightly-clad people complement this moving story of one woman who did what she could to make the world a better place.



Planting the Trees of Kenya: the Story of Wangari Maathai
by Claire A. Nivola
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008).



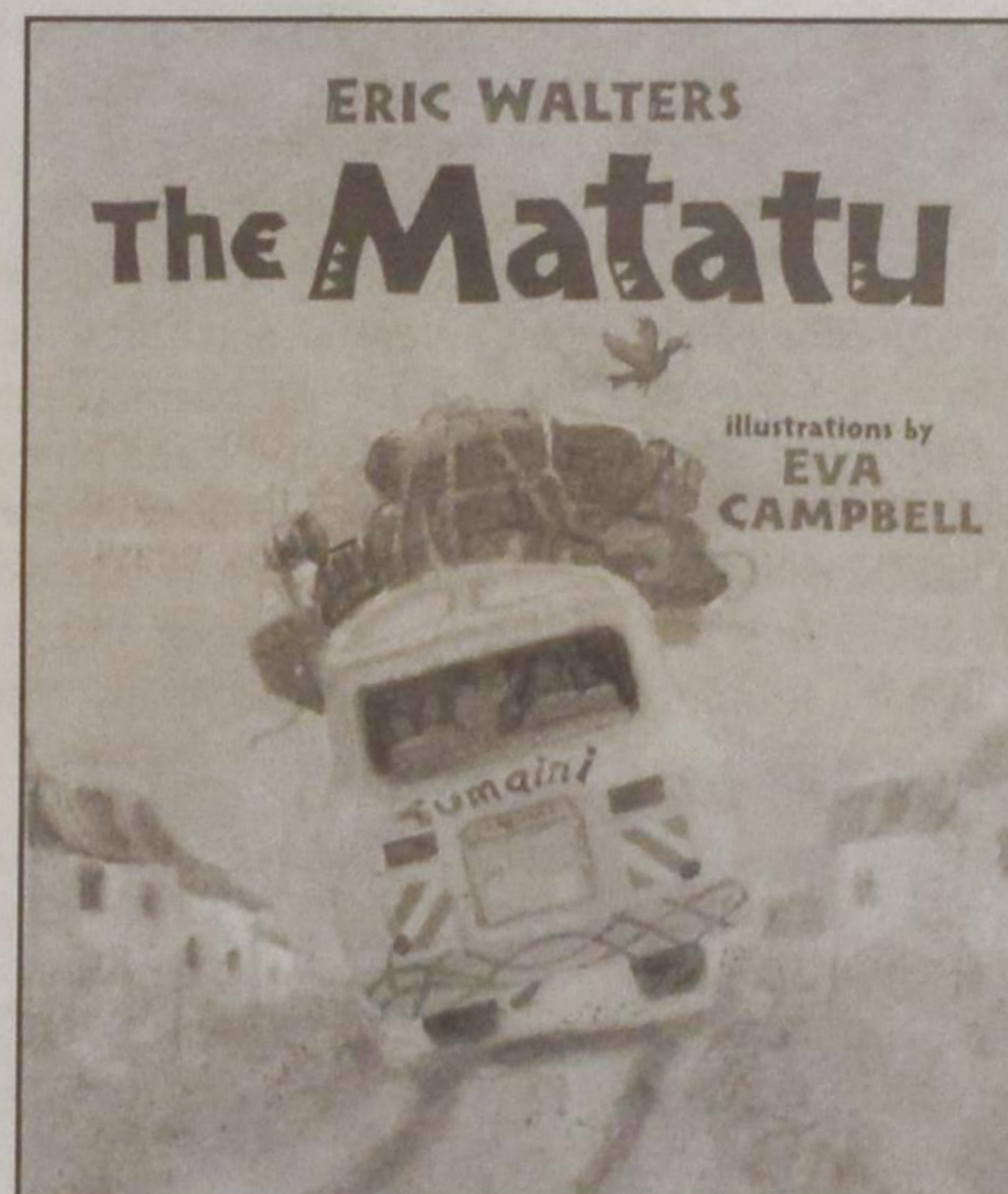
A Good Trade
by Alma Fullerton.
Illustrated by Karen Patkau
(Pajama Press, 2013).

In an Ugandan village, Kato wakes up early to walk to a distant well. On the way, he passes soldiers with guns guarding a field where cattle graze. At the borehole, Kato fills his jerry cans with water, then begins the long trek home. By the village square, he notices a parked aid

truck, peers in the back of it, and sees cases filled with running shoes.

Later, while doing chores at home, Kato notices a single white poppy blooming in the garden. Carefully, he plucks the blossom and carries it to the aid truck, where he's first in line to receive a new pair of shoes. He makes a good trade by giving the aid worker the poppy in return.

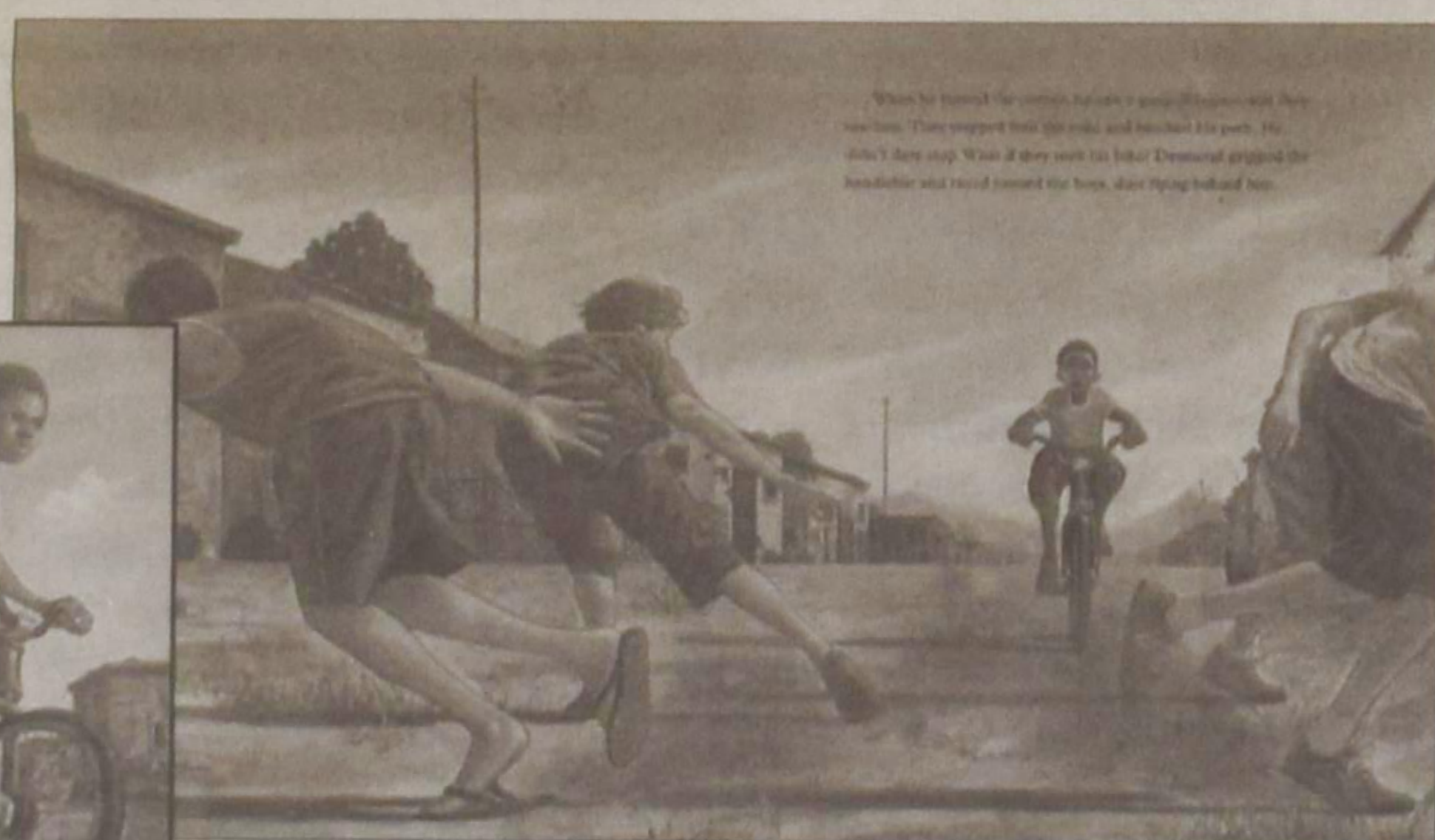
This life-affirming, celebrative book about a child like many others who are survivors of war and residents of harsh climates gently reveals the beauty of gratitude and the truth that, no matter the circumstances, people long to retain their dignity by reciprocating each in his or her own way when help is rendered.



The Matatu
by Eric Walters.
Illustrated by Eva Campbell
(Orca Book Publishers, 2012).

Based on an East African Kamba folktale, *The Matatu* relates the story of five-year-old Kioko and his grandfather as they ride on the van-like bus used for public transportation. Kioko asks his grandfather why dogs always chase matatus. His grandfather launches into a humorous tale about a dog, a goat and a sheep. Kioko peppers him with questions as he tries to understand what his grandfather is telling him. When they arrive at their destination, Kioko takes action to remedy an unresolved conflict at the tale's conclusion.

This humorous story does more than highlight an old folktale. It also puts the spotlight on the loving relationship between a grandfather and his grandchild, as well as the secure place they have in their community. Bright illustrations bring East African culture to life, and show the role that matatus play in everyday events and the relationships between ordinary people.

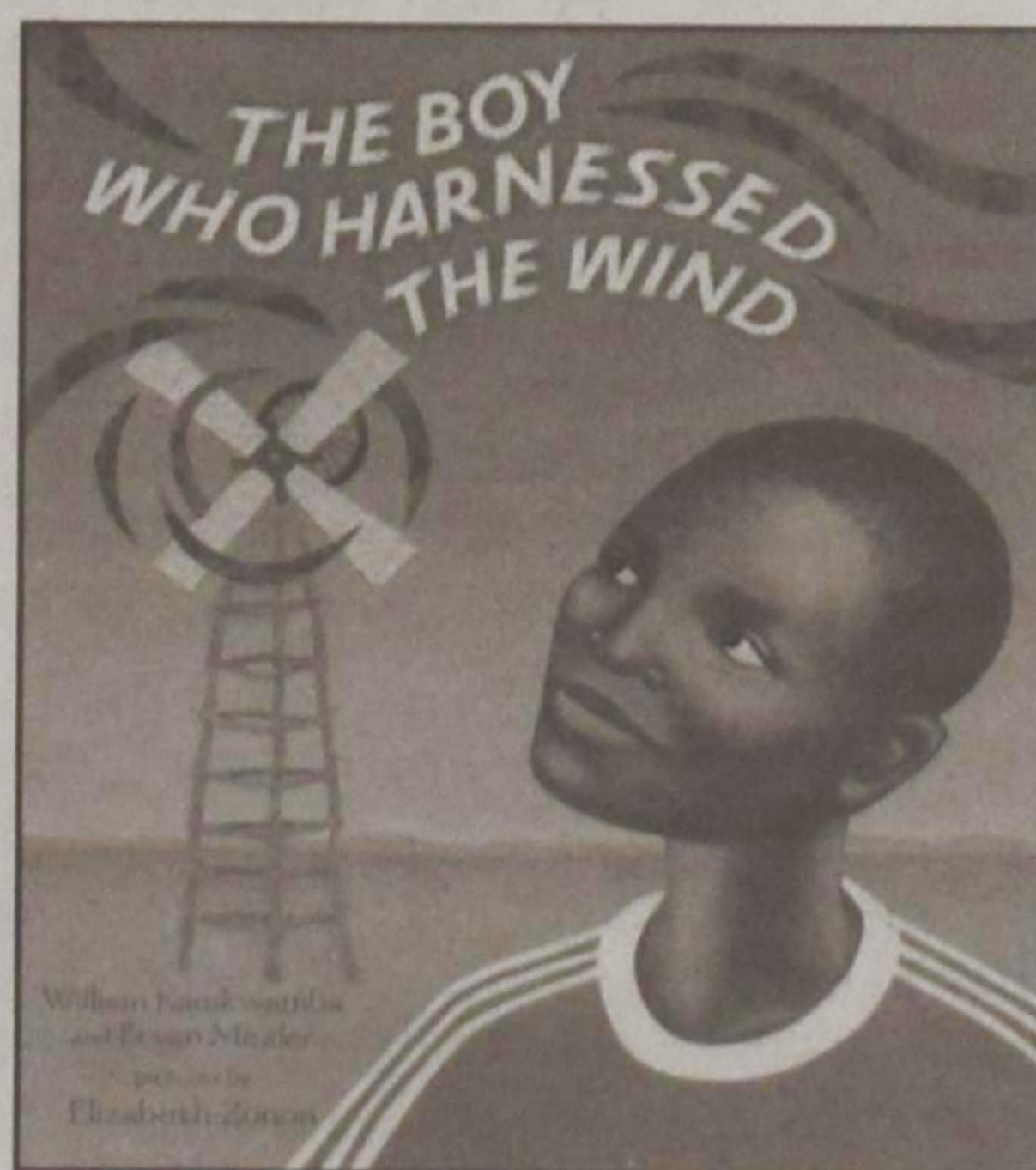


Desmond and the Very Mean Word: a Story of Forgiveness
by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Douglas Carlton Abrams.
Illustrated by A.G. Ford, (Candlewick Press, 2013).

Desmond rides his new bike through a South African township to show it to Father Trevor, a loving priest who cares for all people, no matter their status or race. As Desmond speeds past a gang of white boys, they yell a very mean word at him. Later, Desmond tells Father Trevor about what happened. Desmond refuses to forgive the boys, even though Father Trevor encourages him to do so.

Filled with hatred, Desmond gets even. The next time he sees the boys, he shouts the meanest word he knows at them. Instead of feeling better as he expected he would, he feels worse. Slowly, Desmond begins to understand what Father Trevor meant when he said, "When we hurt someone, it hurts us, too." Father Trevor also teaches Desmond that "when you forgive someone, you free yourself from what they have said or done." Later, when Desmond encounters one of the gang members, he is able to forgive the boy and experience freedom.

This simply told, age-sensitive story, which is based on an event that happened in Archbishop Desmond Tutu's childhood and subtly refers to the appalling legacy of apartheid, introduces young readers to the power and gift of forgiveness.



The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind
by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer.
Illustrated by Elizabeth Zunon
(Dial Books for Young Readers, 2012).

William Kamkwamba grew up in a Malawian village which suffered the effects of drought and famine. A curious boy, William wondered what made truck engines run and radios operate. When he was forced to quit school because his poor parents could no longer afford the fees, he decided to go to the library down the road, which was a gift from the Americans.

In one book, William read, "Windmills can produce electricity and pump water." His life and that of his community was slowly transformed as his dream of constructing a windmill to generate electricity became a reality. He realized that his windmill was just the first step to creating a windmill that could generate enough electricity to pump water from a well to nurture crops and alleviate famine.

This true story is based on the life of William Kamkwamba, who built his first windmill at the age of 14. Today, William is an engineering student at an American university. He plans to return to Malawi after graduation so that he can work on renewable energy to generate electricity and to pump water in villages.

Features

When someone sins against us

David Snapper

There was a time when I was unable to forgive. Partly because I didn't know how to forgive, I agonized over what it might mean to forgive; but, more importantly, I simply did not want to forgive. In fact, I refused to forgive. In the early years of my personal hurts, I was angry. Anger is a powerful drug.

As a child, I had been taught by my parents how to ask others to forgive me when I had done wrong, but I had never been taught how to forgive someone else. When I finally learned just how to forgive, I became free! I learned to embrace forgiveness as the pathway to a joyful present and a future with promise.

Instead of teaching me how to forgive, well-intentioned people had assured me I was justified in demanding apologies or compensation. Or they told me to "let it go" and to "get over it." I'd been taught to *cope* with hurt, *manage* hurt, *deal* with my pain. But not how to forgive.

Seven Deceptions

Many of us believe we don't need to forgive. We persuade ourselves that forgiving is optional by way of these explanations:

Justice: Refusing to forgive is one way to punish those who hurt us and secure justice.

Fear: People avoid forgiving out of fear of looking like a "loser."

Rights: If we forgive, we may feel cheated out of what is rightfully ours.

Anxiety: In a state of intense emotional hurt, we may be so frantic that forgiving feels impossible.

Shame: Once shamed, we may feel that even looking at the anguish inside our heart runs the risk of ripping it out.

Forever: We may feel that forgiving "seals" the deal forever. By refusing to forgive, we think we can still negotiate compensation.

Reverse Justice: We may fear that forgiving a terrible sin will only empower and exonerate the evildoer.

All of these reasons feel legitimate. I believed all seven deceptions – and I was wrong.

I had become so angry that 17 years after the event, my hands would still shake with adrenaline whenever I relived it. I was ashamed, not only for the original hurt, but because the people who could have helped me actually refused to help. Resentment steadily overtook my emotional life. I was preoccupied with the humiliation and abandonment. Not forgiving was pure poison to my soul.

On the day I did forgive, God restored my life back me. My friends noticed the change. They asked me to tell them how they, too, could forgive, so I created an outline. Now, with the *(un)hurt* workshop, I'm helping other people to face their hurts with forgiveness. Here is the truth: forgiveness is simple, life-changing, permanent and joyful. Forgiveness is a spiritual gift from God, a blessing. It is an opportunity to participate in the redemption of fallen humanity – namely, your own.

Yes, forgiveness is the pathway to freedom – emotionally, spiritually and even physically. The failure to forgive

can actually result in physical ailments! Forgiving someone is a demonstration of strength, grace and dignity. God not only commanded us to forgive, he showed us how to do it by Christ's daily example, by his ultimate death on the cross on our behalf, and later in his Word.

Does it work?

Today, when I lead my workshop on how to forgive, and I look people in the eyes, I see tears running down their faces. They ask, "How can I forgive what was done to me?"

How can I forgive the shame that was brought into my life when I was 12 years old?

How can I forgive the boss who fired me and hired his nephew who had no experience?

How can I forgive God for allowing my child to die?

How can I forgive my cheating spouse?

People at work, in our churches and our neighbourhoods, have these questions. Their unforgiven hurts poison their daily life. We can't have a good tomorrow if we lie awake at night with our hurts. We cannot worship God with a whole heart if our *hurt* is the lord of our life!

It will work

I want to relay this assurance: we can forgive. We can cure bitterness and hurt with forgiveness. When we forgive, we will not feel cheated, neglected or abused. Instead, we will feel the grace and power of God! Life changes as fear is replaced with confidence.

I know this for two reasons:

First, I have seen and experienced this in my own life and in the lives of many other people. People who forgive, following biblical direction, find themselves free from their worst hurts. (Sometimes almost instantly. Others need a bit more time.)

Secondly, and more importantly, I know forgiving works because it works for God. Let me say that again: forgiving is the behaviour of God that changes his wrath to kindness. When we forgive, we imitate the behaviour of God.

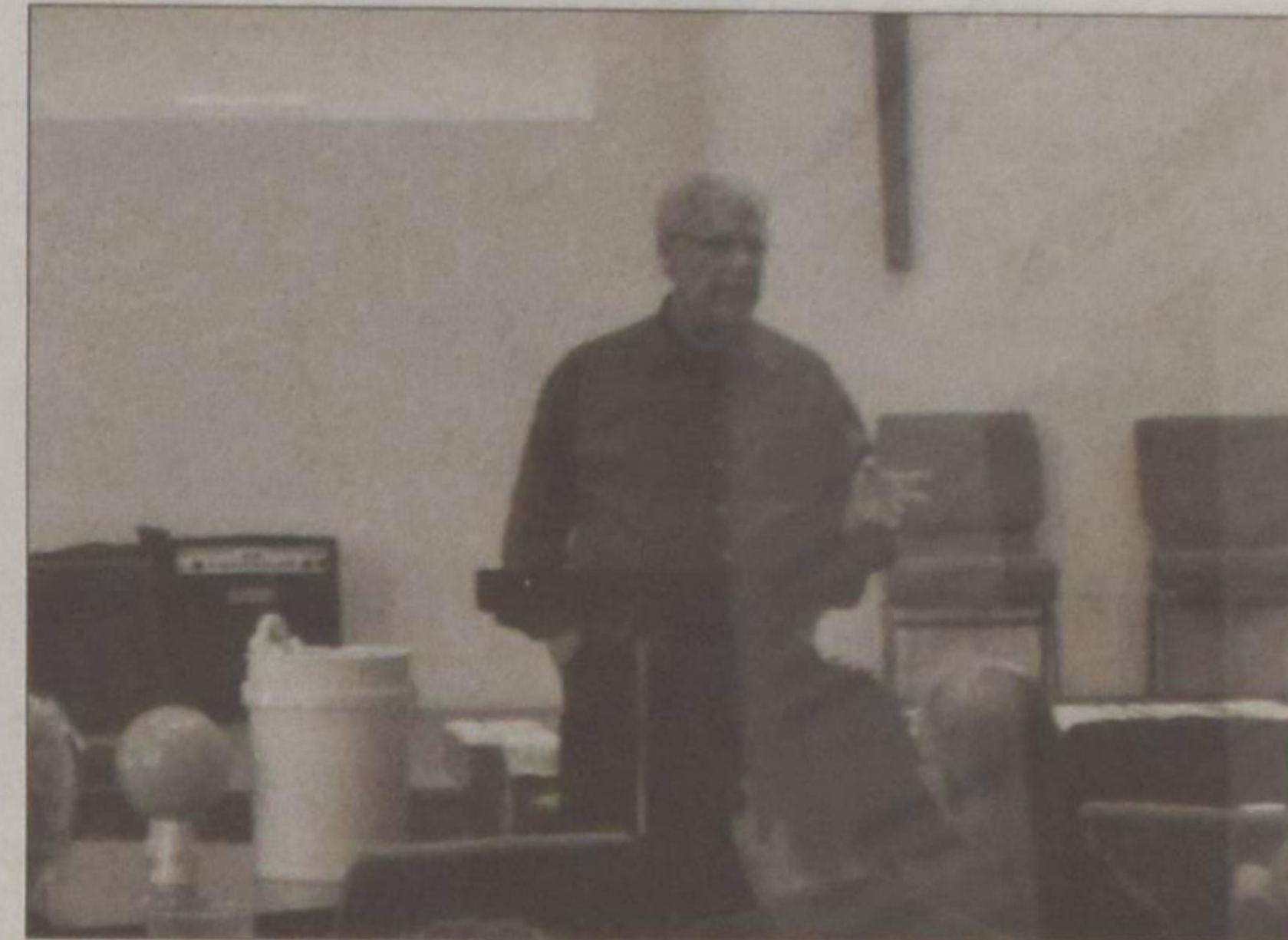
Imagine Jesus on the cross. See him gasping for breath. Could you imagine that he would say: "Father, please forgive them if you insist."

But, as for me, I still hate them, but I suppose you have to forgive them anyway. Just know that I am not happy." No, Jesus came to save us. Forgiving is how God turns our condemnation into redemption.

Forgiveness and grace go hand in glove

"Wait a minute! What about murderers, terrorists and rapists? We can't be expected to forgive them!" I have heard those objections dozens of times. Let me sketch an answer for these legitimate concerns. God does not forgive everyone – for God is both holy and just. But, let's be clear, *only* God is holy and just. Only God has the ability and the authority to make final judgments. When I forgive, I put aside my personal need to punish and protect my own dignity because I trust God to take care of justice for me. If I refuse to forgive, I'm refusing to trust God to do his work.

Jesus told us to forgive when someone sins against us. When we forgive someone who has sinned against us, we



David Snapper presents the *(un)hurt* workshop.

know in our hearts that we are also forgiven by God. We are the objects of God's love and grace, a love and grace which far transcend the hurting shame we experience in this world.

Must we become friends with the person who hurt us? No, reconciliation is not required. In fact, you may have to testify in court against the person who hurt you – even while you forgive. Forgiveness does not preclude accountability. Even so, people are often so transformed by forgiveness that they want to be reconciled. But not always. God will make it clear. Such is the power of the Holy Spirit.

The choice of forgiveness

Jesus taught forgiveness. In the parable of the prodigal son, when the son returned to his father after wallowing with the pigs, he did not plead to be forgiven. No. The father raced out to receive his son who had been forgiven even before he'd had a chance to repent.

The older brother, in sad contrast, would not forgive, bitterly nursing the misguided notion of his moral superiority. In Jesus's story, the unforgiving brother was left in the field alone, away from the loving embrace of his father and restored brother.

In my journey to forgiveness, it was the parable of the unmerciful steward that I could not escape. Even though he had been forgiven a massive debt, the steward's response was to attack a fellow villager and demand repayment for a small debt. His idea of forgiveness was to *be* forgiven, but not to *offer* forgiveness. Consequently, the unmerciful steward lost his soul!

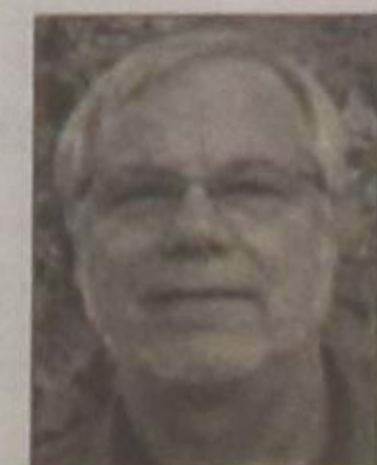
We must forgive as we have been forgiven.

In Charles Dickens's book, *Great Expectations*, Miss Havisham enjoyed every good thing life offered: good looks, money, youth, family and friends. But after she was jilted at her wedding, she lived in bitter hate, wasting her life seeking to punish all men. Dickens was right: her life was a sham. Miss Havisham is Dickens's picture of what unforgiving bitterness looks like.

Bob Cratchett, of *A Christmas Carol*, is the Dickensian counterpoint to Miss Havisham. Bob is poor and abused, but humbly and optimistically endures a cruel boss and a sick child. Generations of readers have loved him. Bob Cratchett is Dickens's picture of what forgiveness looks like.

Whom do we wish to be: Miss Havisham or Bob Cratchett? The bitter elder brother or the noble prodigal father? The unmerciful steward? Forgiveness is the difference! ➤

David Snapper (pastor@anchorshope-church.org) is the pastor of Anchor of Hope Church in Silverdale, Wash.



Forgiving is how God turns our condemnation into redemption.

Features

The sociology of forgiveness: a case study

David Snapper

Jayna stared dully through a small security window, down a long corridor, and focused on the steel entry doors. Her parents eventually entered those doors, cleared security and walked the long aisle towards the meeting room.

Jayna dominated the meeting space with body language, a barely-concealed rage and complete silence. No words were spoken and none were needed as her few personal possessions were stuffed into a bag with her parole paperwork. The three silent figures turned to the exit.

Outdoors, in the Washington drizzle, Jayna seized her opportunity. "I hate you! I hate you both!" was her explosive explanation of her arrest, conviction and sentencing. Mom wept all the way home. Dad swore to himself, but said nothing. Jayna had not seen her parents together in three years. She had been a model student, a perfect daughter and a joy to her friends, but something had changed. Deep in the scorched chambers of her heart burned a secret so private and dark that there were no words.

Seven months after the silent ride home, some normalcy had returned. Dad was back with his girlfriend in Texas. Mom was employed in a brokerage house and maintained the household on her handsome income. Jayna, in contrast, was beyond her parents' control; taking pride in humiliating them, she felt so empowered that she doubted anyone could control her.

Juvenile Courts Parole Officer T. J. Martinez could. And did. Jayna entered my private study unannounced and uninvited, plopped into the huge antique rocking chair in my office, and informed me that Martinez had given me three weeks to help her finish 20 hours of community service.

Martinez often directs kids to me for the purpose of supervising community service probation. I closed my computer and turned my attention to the demanding, angry young woman. In the space of three weeks we would have 20 hours together. It was time to begin.

"Jayna, on a scale of 1 to 10, how angry are you when you wake up in the morning? And when you go to bed at night?" Jayna thought quietly as if it were a complex question.

Anger fuels risk

In the past 35 years many juvenile and adult parolees have gone through a similar process with me. Some details have been modified slightly to protect her identity, but Jay-



I want to be happy again.

na's story is completely accurate. About half of convicted juveniles are re-arrested within one year of release, and half of those are subsequently re-convicted. Their stories run from simple mistakes to heart-wrenching abuse, from carelessness to malice, and from pathos to triumph. Most are angry. They are the ones at greatest risk.

I teach the paroled kids, along with their families and friends, how to stop being angry. Not to hide the anger, nor to boast about it. Not to contain or manage it, but to remove it completely and restore grace and dignity where once hurt reigned.

Always angry

"7," was Jayna's reply.

"7?" I pried tenderly.

"9," she conceded.

"When's the last time you were at a '2' for an entire day?"

Silence.

"Do you want to learn how to be at a '2'? Not always, but a lot of the time?"

Silence.

"OK, I'll tell you what I can do for you. You tell me if you like this idea. When I was a kid, I was very angry and was in trouble. For 17 years no one helped me with my anger. Instead, they told me to ignore it. But I couldn't ignore the anger; it was everywhere I went because it was part of me. Jayna, you're 16 years old. If you stay angry as long as I did, you'll be 33. That's too long. Do you want

to go for a '2' on the Anger-O-Meter or are you happy at '9'? What kind of mother will you be at '9'? Would you rather be angry or happy?" When she rolled her eyes at the prospect of marriage and shook her head in mock disgust, it was safe to continue.

Forgiveness as the way to freedom

The experience of hurt – such as the abandonment Jayna was feeling – creates confusion that lasts a lifetime for many people. We would have a mere 20 hours to unconfuse her life and take four very specific steps to free her from confusing and debilitating hurt. I use this simple outline:

1. Who hurt you? It isn't who you think.
2. How much are you owed? How to add it up.
3. Who will pay for the damage done? How to make it stop hurting.
4. When will you feel better? Setting the prisoners free.

This process is called "forgiving" or "forgiveness." When people forgive, their lives change. Anger is replaced with calm. Shame is replaced with grace. Forgiveness creates power and strength. Forgiveness increases the sense of happiness that comes with confidence. Kids look different when they are happy.

Jayna was angry at her parents for what she interpreted as abandonment – so angry that she had purposefully chosen to punish her parents by destroying her own life. She started with shoplifting and for three months enjoyed the addictive thrill. Then she was arrested. Today, her name is most likely on the National Retailer Mutual Association theft database.

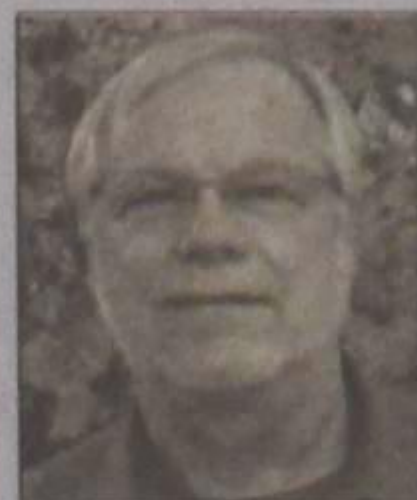
As a juvenile, Jayna's court record may be purged at age 18. She can recover and she can turn back into the capable and delightful young woman she was just three years earlier. Or she may remain addicted to the adrenaline rush of punishing her parents with shoplifting. Or worse.

Outside my study window Jayna's mom was waiting in her darkened car with the wipers flicking the gentle drizzle off the opaque glass. Only her face was lit by the glow of her iPhone.

"I want to be a good mom someday . . . and . . ." Jayna rocked gently and deliberated as she stared out my study windows across the parking lot and into the April drizzle. ". . . I want to be happy again." ☞

Q&A

WITH DAVID SNAPPER,
creator of the
(un)hurt workshop



Cathy Smith

Tell us a little about yourself.

For the past 30 years Nancy and I have served the military community of Silverdale, Wash. We are surrounded by submarines, aircraft carriers, trees and mountains. We are blessed with a great church family and thank God for our ministry here. I hope to spend time in my upcoming retirement helping people learn exactly how to forgive their hurts and shame. And maybe do some kayaking in the San Juan Islands.

You created the (un)hurt workshop as a tool to help people understand "forgiveness." Can you share with us some of the places where you've presented this material?

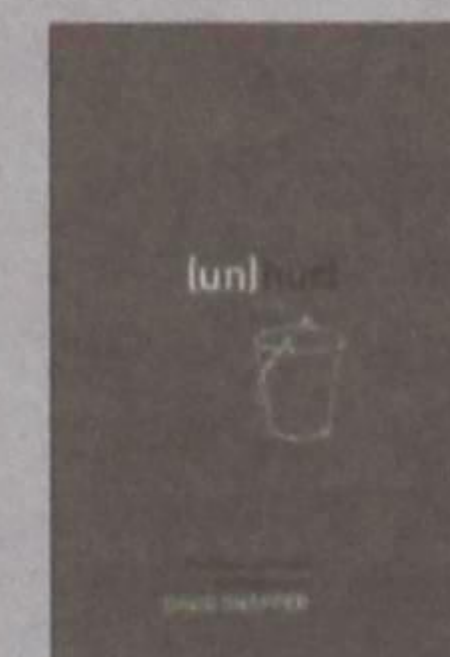
To hundreds of people that I meet in town, one at a time; the Silverdale YMCA; several local churches; the denominational leadership meeting in Texas; to 200 juvenile parolees from County Jail. Up until now my primary focus has been local, but recently my church council has given me more time to present the workshop. My upcoming plans include a pastors' retreat in September and a military-based workshop this fall. I am hoping to present the workshop inside the Juvenile Detention Center later this year.

If you ask a roomful of 30 people, "How many of you have a serious hurt feeling in your life?" all the hands will go up. Then if you ask, "Did anyone ever tell you exactly how to make the hurt go away?" no hands go up. Forgiveness is God's great gift to us. The most important part of (un)hurt is that anyone can learn this basic

biblical process and help a friend or relative out of hurt and into freedom.

How has the (un)hurt workshop been received?

Very well. Participants are hugely relieved to be free from hurt and shame! They get their original life restored. It works, of course, because forgiveness was created by God to work.



Is the (un)hurt workshop available to our readers?

Yes. In three ways:

1. howtoforgiveinfoursteps.com
2. Faith Alive Resources
3. I am available to visit churches and retreats for a six-hour live presentation. Please call 360-509-0856. ☞

Cathy Smith (cathy@christiancourier.ca) is Features Editor with CC. She lives in Wyoming, Ont.

Features

Lessons I learned while (almost) dying

Peter Frieswick

At the end of June I went on a road trip with my friend, Joel Sjaarda. For him, it was a long anticipated opportunity to photograph the sparse and wildly different landscapes of the American South and Pacific West – the mountain ranges crawling out of Death Valley that look like heaps of burned flesh, the magnificent trees in Jedediah Smith Redwood State Park, the desert near Tonopah, Nevada, where the night sky pops with stars along 360 degrees of horizon. For me, I wanted to decompress after completing a Master's degree and was looking forward to meeting with God by hiking and camping in the wilderness. What neither of us anticipated was almost dying on a mountain.

Joel and I began the 23 kilometre round trip hike up California's White Mountain Peak in the late afternoon, following a jeep road that leads to the 14,252 foot summit. The plan was to reach the top by sunset so Joel could photograph the stars during the night, then descend again.

Lesson 1: High altitudes = less oxygen.

Even though we were taking altitude sickness pills and we'd spent the previous day at 11,500 feet to acclimatise, we were not prepared for how demanding the hike would be. White Mountain Peak is the third highest peak in California; at its summit the oxygen levels are about half of what they are at sea level, which made it much harder to breathe. What I anticipated would be a two and half hour hike turned into nearly five.

Lesson 2: The higher the mountain, the colder it gets.

By the time we reached the valley 500 feet below the summit, it was hailing and snowing. Joel and I wore hoodies, which didn't keep out the wind, and I wore an extra pair of socks on my hands for mittens.

We talked very little during the final ascent, drinking less water than we should have, wanting to conserve what we had left for our return. Our heads ached from the pressure and our limbs felt thick and heavy. The air was so dry and thin we had to stop every 50 feet or so to gasp for breath. Joel stumbled underneath his 75 litre hiking bag, which was full of heavy camera equipment.

Lesson 3: Wet clothes can kill fast.

Upon reaching the summit we collapsed behind a low, circular stone wall previous hikers had constructed as a makeshift shelter from the piercing wind. We changed out of our sweat-soaked clothes into dry ones, but not before Joel caught a chill. He felt nauseous and after a few minutes we assembled his two-person tent to weather out a snow storm blowing toward us.

"I feel like I'm going to die," Joel said, teeth chattering. He was feverish, his core body temperature dropped alarmingly low, and his body shook uncontrollably. I zipped our sleeping bags together and tried to keep him warm with my body heat.

We grew discouraged as we realized how dire our situation was: our cell phone didn't work, we were the only ones on the mountain, no one knew where we were, we were both seriously dehydrated, it was growing colder and night had fallen. Several times I burst into hysterical fits of laughter for no reason.



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The mountain on which the friends nearly lost their lives, Bristlecone Pine Forest of California, at 11,500 feet.

Lesson 4: Sometimes waiting for help is not the best option.

For three hours we huddled in a semi-conscious state, listening to the wind pull at the tent flaps as the stony ground leached our body heat through the sleeping bags. I displayed the same symptoms as Joel – nausea, headache and chills. Joel's headache intensified and he was worried that his brain was swelling due to the pressure, which is one possible outcome of altitude sickness. After a number of prayers, we decided we had to get off the mountain immediately or we might not live through the night.

headache, I focused on my friends and family. "I will see them again," I repeated over and over to myself.

In retrospect, this has been one of the most profound moments of the whole experience. When I was fighting to live, I didn't worry about the things that usually consume my day: not having a job, the status of my bank account, or whether anyone will read my stories five years from now. I didn't even want to live so much as I just wanted to see my loved ones again. The ordeal helped me create a new motto: "Life is simple: hold close the people you love most."

Lesson 7: God has a sense of humour, even as he saves.

After three hours of walking, we were saved, if you can believe it, by the caretaker at a high altitude research station, where the University of California studies the effects of altitude on pregnant sheep. After I woke him up at three in the morning, he drove us the remaining two miles down the trail head where our car was parked. Hours later we were "saved" again by the receptionist at a Motel 6, a Hispanic man by the name of Jesús, who went out of his way to prepare a room for us to rest in. This made me laugh because in John 14:2 Jesus tells the disciples that heaven has many rooms and he is preparing one for them.

While we rested, the Lord directed me to Psalm 121, which I wryly noted is called a "song of ascents": "I lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip – he who watches over you will not slumber. . . . The Lord will keep you from all harm – he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore."

While reading this passage I marvelled at how accurately it portrayed our situation. We were helpless and exhausted, but the God who never sleeps took care of us. Though the path was strewn with fist-sized rocks that we stumbled over, and though we were severely weakened, God never let us fall. Even though we felt alone when we were on the mountain, we weren't. Psalm 121 has become for me, as I am sure it has for the many people God delivers from danger, a personal message of encouragement from the Lord: "I knew this would happen. Don't worry, I've got you." >



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Peter (left) and Joel (right) standing next to Boy Scout Tree in Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park.

Lesson 5: What's my life worth? Knowing when and what to downsize.

We threw away most of our food, Joel's \$150 tripod – anything we could to lighten the load. Joel looked so awful I told him he should leave behind some of his cameras and lenses as well. He wouldn't, because he had a lot of expensive gear, so

we shared the weight between our packs. We discarded our wet clothes too, wrapping sleeping bags around our bodies for warmth. Just before we left we discovered a one-litre bottle of water that someone had left in a geocache box near where we pitched the tent.

During the first part of our descent, the going was relatively easy. Instead of following the winding road, we half-slid, half-stumbled down the side of the peak, hopping from switchback to switchback. However, in the valley directly below the summit we encountered what was one of the hardest parts of our return trip. The path curved upward into the darkness, appearing to go on forever in the weak light of our headlamps. With every step we gasped for breath. Every ten steps we rested. An hour after we left the top we'd hardly descended 500 feet.

"Promise me you won't stop walking until we get out of here," Joel said. I did, and then made him promise too.

Lesson 6: Life is simple.

After the first valley we made better time, but not by much. We walked unsteadily, weaving back and forth along the path. Joel paused often, bending over to clutch at his stomach. I stopped drinking water, afraid I would vomit. To fight off the desire to give up, and to push past my intense

Peter Frieswick (peter.frieswick@gmail.com) recently completed a MA in English Creative Writing at the University of New Brunswick. He enjoys asking questions and sharing meals with friends.



Features

When you're done with pundits, soul wrestling & looking at the sky

Ann Voskamp

So there was this girl named Katie and she laughed loud and like an angel when someone said she was like Mother Teresa.

It's strange how this can move in you, a laughter like this, and how hands can embody love.

Katie was 18 when she flew to Uganda.

She took Jesus at his Word: Real life is lived on your knees. I was a whole lot older than that when I first started to read over at *Kisses from Katie*, years ago now. I am still finding my knees and what it means to really live.

How in the world do you keep on living every day in middle North America when you're mildly wild to go live something as radical like Katie?

How many of the Esther Generation hear Jesus asking us now: "Why do you stand here looking into the sky?" (Acts 1:11). We're hungry to do more than stand here looking at the sky – but tell us what? Where? How?

How many women on this spinning globe read Katie and lay in bed at night desperately wrestling and writhing with their own life, hearts dizzy and aching . . . I was one of them. These are not trite ponderings. You only pass by this way once.

We want that

Your life is passing like a hand waving from the back of a train and every choice determines whether you are on the right track. It all matters. How do you keep your nails filed and your eyebrows plucked when your secret hope is to have dirt under your fingernails and the strings of your heart plucked into a symphony that might make stars move?

Go ahead, give us that. We want that. We are the generations that are done living the comforts of this world and we're ready to live uncomfortable because we're ready for the comfort of God.

"Jesus wrecked my life." That's what Katie said. "For as long as I could remember, I had everything this world says is important. In high school, I was class president, homecoming queen, top of my class. I dated cute boys and wore cute shoes and drove a cute sports car."

Having everything doesn't mean you have the right track.

"Slowly but surely I began to realize the truth," Katie gives words to all generations: "I had loved and admired and worshipped Jesus without doing what He said . . . I wanted to actually do what Jesus said to do."

That.

The Esther Generation, the North American Church, we're hungry for uncomfortable and that's where we are at:

We are done with loving Jesus – without doing what he says. We know that loving Jesus means doing what he says.

But what in the world does that really look like? How? Where? And our husbands are here.

Katie graduated high school – and then got on a plane for Uganda. Serving at a Ugandan orphanage was to be short-term. One year – and then back home to "normal" and the shimmer of the American dream.

But Katie watched rag-poor parents hand over their children to the orphanage so they'd get three meals a day and education. She was witnessing the ripping apart of families. She waited on God. She didn't wait for someone else to do something. She saw a need and said to God, "Here I am – Use me."

Closer

By his grace alone and out of her offered weakness – she ended up pioneering a sponsorship program, including meals and school fees, to keep kids in families – over 600 of them. She started a school feeding program for a few thousand more. When a storm toppled a house on to a 9-year-old down the street, and Katie discovered that her, and her 7-year-old and 5-year-old sisters were all living alone, orphaned, and fending for themselves, she said they could sleep at her house until God made it clear what came next.

What came next is that they called her Mommy.

We want clarity; God wants us to come closer. Life is always clear when you press closer and see it through the sheer love of God.

That's what Katie did. And that's how it began – one surrendered girl right out of high school finding herself mothering 13 little girls.

Breathing answers

When I find out Compassion Canada has invited our oldest girl and I to Uganda to meet our sponsored child, Katie emails, "Come!" Hope and I show up on her doorstep late on a Thursday afternoon. Hope stands there smiling shyly at 13 smiles. Katie and I fall into each others' arms and we believe in miracles.

In five minutes, I am on Katie's couch and her little Patricia has dragged up a pile of books and I am sitting criss-cross applesauce and reading *The Ox-Cart Man* aloud in Uganda with this little girl nestled on my lap, her head of braids tucked under my chin. I think my heart might explode.

Love is complicated and the simplest thing in the world. And that is all there is.

Katie stirs beans in a massive pot on the stove and one of the girls pulls up a chair and mashes a mountain of potatoes and I read of the Ox-Cart Man selling his cart at Plymouth market and there's a map of the world on the wall over Katie's table and that's what I want to do – We could write it on a million kitchen chalkboards: You are doing something great with your life – when you're doing all the small things with his Great love.

You are changing the world – when you are changing one person's world.

You aren't missing your best life – when you aren't missing opportunities to love like Christ.

Katie and I stay up late into the night talking, two mothers, and I feel like I am breathing answers.

Mother of a half-dozen, I watch 13 girls with their 24-year-old mother for three days. Grace

reigns and peace pervades. You mother as well as you know your Father. I look at Katie and all I can think: She mothers like she's memorized the face of her Father. It is a holy witnessing.

Katie pours over Scripture at the close every meal. She reads his Word like something's burning hot in her chest. Her girls never leave the table without smiling toward her, a chorus: "Thanks Mom . . . for food." For food. Not this particular food, not this particular meal – but for just. for food. at. all. I never leave the table without blinking it back.

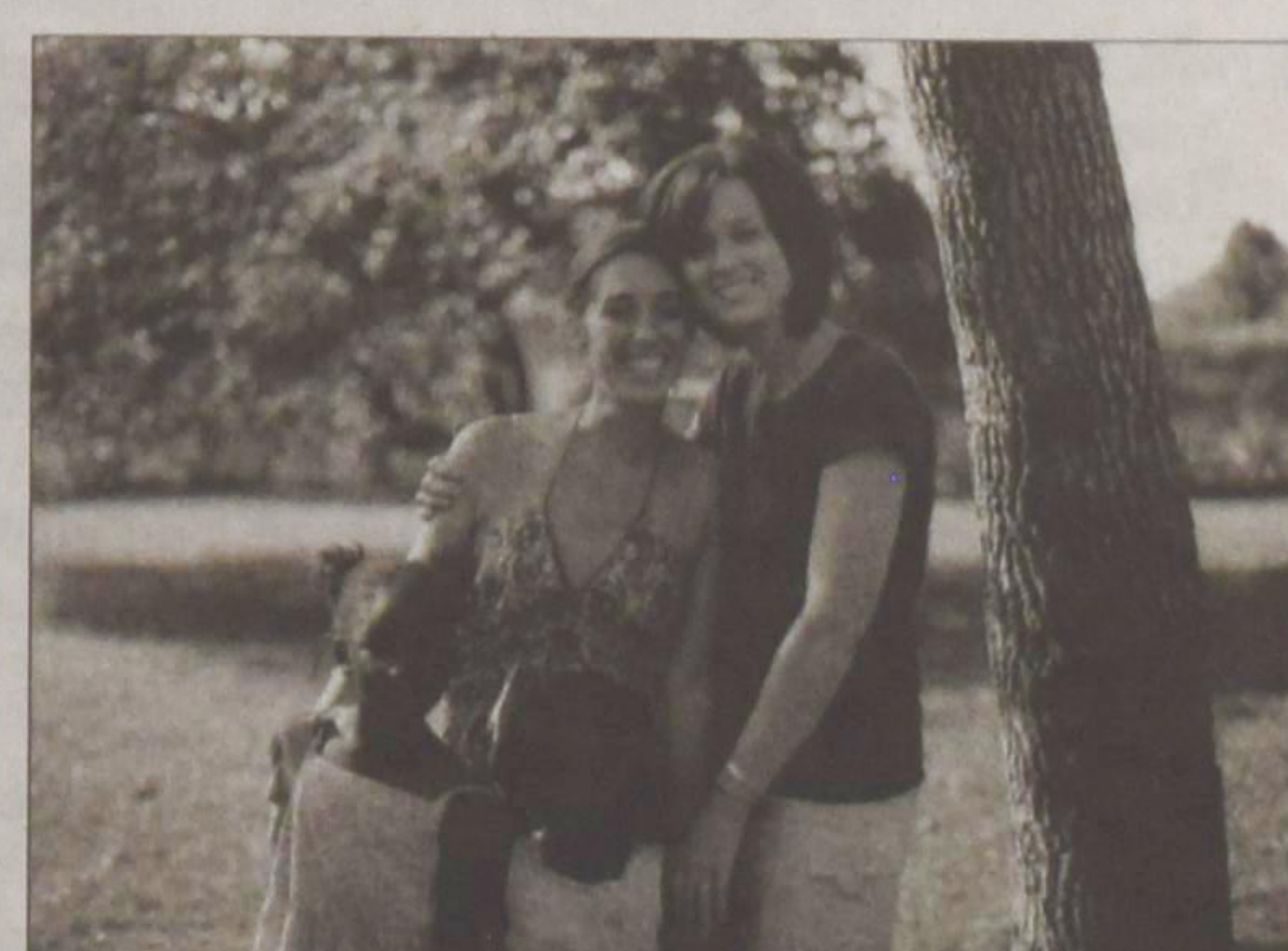
Living radical isn't about where you live – it's about how you love.

It's about realizing – Love doesn't happen when you arrive in a certain place. It happens when your heart arrives in a certain place – wherever you are, right where you are, dirt road Africa or side street America.

Continued on p. 17



Katie was 18 when she moved to Uganda, saw a need and said to God: "Here I am. Use me."



Living radical isn't about where you live; it's about how you love (left). You mother as well as you know your Father (centre). Two mothers: Katie and Ann Voskamp (right).

Columns

Borderless

Brent van Staaldin



Islam hasn't been around long enough to develop a sense of humour about itself.

I heard these words in early 2006, just as the Danish cartoon controversy was reaching its heated peak. A few ignorant doodles had inflamed and alienated most of the world's Muslims, while everyone else, stunned by the magnitude and violence of the response, couldn't figure what the big deal was. *What a clever indictment, I thought. And how true. And what excellent fodder for my Grade 11 Media class to discuss!*

So I asked my students – predominantly Arab Muslims – to respond on the blogs they had set up for the class. Agree or disagree, and why? In the finest open-ended, holistic teaching spirit, I encouraged them to be critical, creative, funny and thoughtful and reassured them that they would only be graded on the completion and mechanics of the assignment, and not the content or substance of their answers.

What happened? Well, the result was a predictably un-humorous and un-creative parade of disagreement, indignation and wounded feelings – how could anyone ever make fun of a religion, even one's own?

I could have predicted what was going to happen. We'd been in Kuwait for less than a year, already familiar with Arab Muslims' absolute inflexibility and stubborn passion. But still, I hoped that by introducing this nugget of wisdom to a handful of progressive, media-savvy Islamic teenagers I could, in a small measure, help a culture of critical thinking develop amongst those who would be making the Muslim world's future decisions.

However, it was true then and is true now: with very few exceptions, Muslims do not have a sense of humour about their religion.

Projection

Admittedly, I'd been projecting my smug self – i.e. the “enlightened” one – into the assignment. Some of the students caught on, too, rightly divining my alternative agenda. In fact, if you're interested to see my gently-restrained student responses, place the entire above statement within quotation marks in Google.

By that time, my wife and I had discovered a wonderfully diverse congregation, where Christians of all stripes worshipped under one liturgical banner. There, conversations about faith tended to stick with the basics, guided by the common tongue of salvation and love rather than dogma and theology. Furthermore, with so many denominations

A sense of missed opportunity?

choosing to worship together, most of us had developed the ability to laugh at ourselves, a helpful starting point, a useful unity tool.

Of course Christianity has developed a sense of humour about itself, right?

It's not my instinct. Having grown up in a church where the ability to argue catechism and confession can be the unofficial litmus test for salvific potential, I often chafe at how lightly people seem to treat their beliefs. But the more I encounter heated discussions about faith, the more it occurs to me that we need better starting points for how we speak to each other. And, Lord willing, how we speak to those who don't share our beliefs.

Could displaying a clear and comfortable sense of humour about our faith be one way?



We need better starting points for how we speak to those who don't share our beliefs.

Un-representative

As background for this column, I visit the websites of a number of Christian publications – Reformed and Other – to stay current. This month, when I dropped in on *The Banner*, I encountered a few pieces that were generating some heated discussions: the

synod report congratulating itself yet again on the issue of Women In Office and rejoicing in the formation of a committee to study homosexuality in church, an article solidly on the scientific side of evolution and dismissing new-earth ideas, and a couple of articles that presented alternative views on sexuality, one of which challenged the traditional view of marriage.

On one hand, it was gratifying to see the editors taking some risks, salting the usual feel-good propaganda with challenging positions and ideas. On the other, though, if the comments posted below the articles are representative of what members are talking about – and they sound suspiciously like the arguments I've encountered in denominational circles – I'd worry that there are far too many people taking themselves far too seriously.

Grace could start with a self-deprecating smile. Why not acknowledge our common weaknesses and all the areas we've fallen short with a laugh? It would be far easier, I think, to have a good conversation with other Christians and unbelievers that starts with an acknowledgement of our feeble and often misguided foibles of faith. Otherwise . . .

Christianity has been around long enough, yet hasn't developed a sense of humour about itself.

Agree or disagree? And why? ➤

Brent and his wife Rosalee now live in the Westdale neighborhood of Hamilton, Ont. with their first child. To find out more about Brent and his writing, visit brentvans.com.

Principalities & Powers

David Koyzis



At the start of the twentieth century the Middle East was largely ruled by the Ottoman Turks, with Great Britain administering certain territories in their behalf, such as Egypt and Cyprus. Although Muslims outnumbered Christians, there were still sizeable Christian minorities, including the Maronite Catholics of Lebanon, the Assyrian Christians of Mesopotamia and the Coptic Christians of Egypt.

Centuries ago followers of Jesus Christ were in the majority in the region, even after the Muslim Arab conquests and possibly as late as the fourteenth century when the tide turned in favour of Islam. The Ottoman authorities were tolerant of religious diversity, content to rule their nonmuslim subjects through their religious leaders, or ethnarchs. True, they persecuted Christian Armenians from the mid-1890s, but much of the prosperity of the Empire depended on the commercial activities of the nonmuslim communities. Such cities as Thessaloniki, Constantinople, Smyrna and Alexandria were polyglot, religiously-diverse urban centres in which Muslims, Greeks, Jews and Armenians rubbed shoulders constantly in pursuing their respective livelihoods.

Arab identity

This all changed with the coming of the Great War, when nationalist régimes replaced the old imperial orders in so much of Europe and the Middle East. Nationalists pursued a policy of ethnic homogeneity, reserving Turkey for the Turks and Arab countries for the Arabs. This forced Christians to embrace a different strategy for coexistence with Muslim majorities. Up until then they did not generally see themselves as Arabs, but as Copts, Assyrians and so forth, identifying with the pre-Arab populations that had once dominated the region. But Arab nationalism compelled them to embrace an Arab identity or risk being treated as outsiders.

This coincided with the departure of the European powers, especially Britain and France, which had protected the Christian minorities of the Middle East and North Africa. In 1933, after the end of British occupation in Iraq, more than a thousand Assyrian Christians were killed by their Arab neighbours in the Simele massacre. After unsuccessful efforts to secure autonomy before the League of Nations, Assyrians felt betrayed by Britain. Henceforth they would have either to emigrate elsewhere, which many did, or find a new way to integrate into the newly independent states.

Christians and nationalism in the Middle East

Christian Arabs

As a consequence many Christians threw themselves into the Arab nationalist movements, which were anti-imperial and antiwestern in flavour. This necessitated a shift from their previous status as pre-Arab indigenous peoples to that of Christian Arabs fighting alongside their fellow Arabs in the struggle for independent nationhood. In the decades after the Second World War, Christians were disproportionately prominent in the Arab nationalist movements. For example, Michel Aflaq, who was born into an Orthodox Christian family in Syria, eventually became a communist and led the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, a movement that would be dominated by the Assads in Syria and Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

Arab nationalism played down religious distinctives, focusing instead on a pan-Arab identity. As such it seemed an ideal vehicle for the aspirations of Christian minorities who were now part of an Arab majority.

By the 1980s, however, the old Arab nationalism had run out of steam, while Islamism was moving into the ascendancy. Because local Christians had tied their fortunes to such nationalist autocrats as Mubarak, Saddam Hussein and the Assads, they increasingly became targets of the Islamists, who associated them with the discredited old guard. This has made Christians increasingly vulnerable in countries affected by the Arab Spring. In recent months reports have reached us of the anti-Assad rebels in Syria targeting Christian villages. Despite such attacks, western governments, including that of the United States, are supporting the rebel Free Syrian Army against President Bashar al-Assad's government, apparently judging that the tide of history is on their side.

It would be easy for us, as outsiders, to judge that Middle Eastern Christians severely miscalculated by throwing their lot with Arab nationalism. Yet because Islamism by definition makes no place for religious minorities, local Christians understandably prefer the least bad alternative, which might enable them to continue to live in their ancestral homelands with at least some hope of security.

The long-term prospects for Christians in the Middle East are not encouraging. Unless western countries change their policies towards the region, we will continue to see increasing numbers leaving the very places that saw the birth of Christianity two millennia ago. ➤

David T. Koyzis teaches politics at Redeemer University College. His barber is an Assyrian Christian immigrant from Iraq.

Columns

Roots and Wings

Emily Cramer



Because I'm worth it



Wedding season. We have a little collection of invitations on the shelf – navy, mauve-and-white, brown-and-ivory, pale green – some for weddings already passed, some still coming up, all offering a formal ceremony, some food and a glimpse into the bridal couple's sense of style. I enjoy weddings on the whole, but as I get older, I must admit to finding them a bit strange, too. A lot of work and money goes into this one day, and for what? There is the physical and spiritual connecting of two separate lives of course, but is it best served by "the show" of it all, today's formula for wedding-day success? I can't help but think that as time rolls forward, this formula is driven more by "I want my turn too" than by actual meaning. (Which might sound a little hollow coming from a person whose wedding day is already behind her.)

One of the things that still stands out from my wedding planning was the number of times I heard phrases like, "It's your day; don't worry about anyone else." Wedding magazines were, and are, packed with articles that praise brides for ignoring the protests and concerns of those around them and doggedly pursuing their wedding day wish-list. Even if the protests come from the groom. Even if the concerns are about the groom. Brides are expected to listen to no one, only to do whatever is required to make the day spectacular.

TLC's show *Say Yes to the Dress* features a regular contingent of brides who whine or beg until they get a wedding gown worth an average annual salary. The term "bridezilla" was born in this hotbed of entitlement and showmanship, caricatured in the most extreme form by Hollywood's notorious weddings. In Hollywood, it doesn't seem to matter if the marriages themselves last only months or weeks, as long as the wedding was worthy of a spread in *People* magazine. Trends trickle down, and weddings today seem to be steeped in an ethos of selfishness. It reminds me of that familiar L'Oreal ad campaign, "Because I'm worth it." I can only assume this kind of advertising works because we believe, at some level, that we are worth the best that money can buy. Weddings are currently a billion dollar industry in North America and growing.

Serving over self

How did we develop these ideas about weddings – that they are self-representing

events predicated on solo decisions, entirely private and self-determined? Our hotly-defended rights to autonomy in all things romance-related might be responsible for the very marriage breakdowns that cripple and isolate. In the end, this attitude of selfishness is totally at war with marriage, which is inherently a communal arrangement. Marriage is a little microcosm of the life of faith, and the life of faith is about serving the other. Just as it is important to question how our faith will be represented by the way we live, it might be valuable to question how a marriage will be represented by the wedding. On the day it begins, how can a couple demonstrate and experience a new life in which the other matters more than the self? And can this selflessness be extended into the community that is created when two people marry? After all, it is this community that will be called upon to support the marriage down the road.



Where's the groom?
Weddings today are steeped in an ethos of selfishness.

All this is not to suggest that weddings are bad or the desire for beauty is immoral or that we should all say our vows dressed in sackcloth in an attic. In fact, we enjoy weddings because they remind us of love and hope, of promises that matter and social bonds that are intended for permanence. At a very deep level we probably sense that this was the way relationships were meant to be: full of belief in the other, of desire to serve, of joy at days of

togetherness strung long into the future like pearls. And joy is worth celebrating. But weddings can become ugly when this Edenic innocence crashes into our cultural selfishness, our "right" to have what we want. Maybe asking some key questions about what the wedding day will represent can help wrench our cultural focus away from those all-important 12 hours and turn it toward the infinitely more important decades that lie ahead, that will not be a solo experience but will support, and be supported by, a community of intertwined lives. Maybe such consideration will be not only good for wedding planning, it will be the ultimate marriage prep. ➤

*Emily Cramer lives in Barrie, Ont. with her husband and daughter and teaches in the Liberal Arts department at Georgian College. She is reading Margaret Visser's fascinating book, *The Geometry of Love*, about "space, time, mystery, and meaning in an ordinary church."*

Country Living

Meindert Vander Galien



I enjoy checking out different farmers' markets. They should all be buzzing with activity now as this is the month when vendors have plenty of vegetables and fruits to sell.

There are good and bad things about farmers' markets. There's a lot of hype about how the produce is local and fresher. Many folks, however, simply prefer to shop at a supermarket. Farmers' markets are good if you want to see who grows or raises what you're buying. Buying frozen meat like lamb, pork, rabbits, chicken and beef are good choices. The farmer isn't making much of a profit selling lamb or rabbits at \$7 a pound, considering it has to be slaughtered at a slaughter plant. But if you're buying all your veggies at a farmers' market to feed your family, you'd be shelling out a lot of money. You don't go to a farmers' market for a bargain. (One exception: I saw jars of last year's "organic honey" at half the price of new honey so I bought two jars.) Vendors sell their produce in small amounts that are often over-priced. Small, square containers of early yellow beans were priced at \$4 at the markets I checked on and the same size containers of small early potatoes were \$5 and \$6. That's a small handful of beans for \$4. You can get a bag of frozen cut beans in the store for \$2.49. It's only at the peak of the harvest that some vendors will sell tomatoes and cucumbers at cheaper rates by the bushel.

It's a much different story when you visit big markets such as the St. Jacobs Farmers' Market (in southern Ont.) and other huge markets in communities where a lot of produce is grown. St. Jacobs is awesome – like a truck load sale. They have everything and lots of free parking nearby.

Some towns and cities want to stick with their original market location, which is downtown, probably to keep the downtown core alive. The city of Brockville, Ont., is a perfect example. Their farmers' market is on a steep, wide street off the downtown main street that has many empty stores and shops. It's a scenic spot overlooking the St. Lawrence River. But the traffic is on the other side of the city where the big box stores are.

Growing in popularity

Just like Canada, farmers' markets are everywhere in the U.S. After 18 years of steady increases, the number of farmers

Farmers' markets: The good, the bad and the far away

markets across the country now registered with the USDA is 7,864. In 1994, there were 1,744.

California, the country's top agricultural producing state, has 827 farmers' markets, according to the USDA. In California they also have the California Federation of Certified Farmers' Markets. Before a farmer can sell at a "Certified Farmers' Market," a government inspector checks to make sure that the farm grows the produce the farmer is selling.



The number of farmers' markets across Canada has increased in recent years.

I was surprised to see farmers' markets along the southern coastal towns and cities of California because houses there do not have gardens or lawns. When driving through last year we visited some of the markets. They are similar to the ones here but vendors sell produce, nuts and fruits that we're not familiar with.

New flavours

The Laguna Beach Farmers' Market is at the far edge of their downtown and below a hilly mountain range. There's no parking close by in this town of 23,000 people and if you find a parking spot you still have to walk a few blocks to get to the market. Five of the 40 vendors are located at the very back, which is almost beside a smelly sewage waste treatment plant. There are no washroom facilities. It was a busy spot when we visited on a Saturday morning. Vendors can sell ungraded eggs and you can buy organic eggs and also fertilized eggs – both at \$5.50 a dozen. Fertilized eggs have a picture of a rooster on the carton. I sampled sage honey at one booth and was surprised by the sweetness. Sage honey is nectar gathered by the bees from the blooms of sage brush which grows "wild" in some parts of California. Honey is sold in small amounts and also in gallon glass jars.

The farmers' market in Seattle, Washington is huge (on nine acres) and was established in 1907. It also has a crafts' market with 200 crafts people, four fish markets that offer an abundance of fresh fish and seafood from the Pacific Northwest and Alaskan waters, collectibles, specialty foods, highstalls – permanent produce stands that sell fresh fruit and vegetables year round – dining, and buskers to entertain the crowds. It's something to witness. That's when big is better. ➤

Meindert van der Galien farms near Renfrew, Ont. Cobs of corn, yams, fruit and salads were bought at the Laguna Beach (California) market and eaten for supper that evening.

Classifieds

Birthday

Happy 90th Birthday



Rev. Dick C. Los
August 16, 2013 DV

Congratulations to our dear father, opa and great opa. Your gentle wisdom, your merciful heart and your humble and godly walk with the Lord is an inspiration for us all.

Marian & Keith Knight
Erika & Jon Bakker
Elise & Paul Bosscher
Lauren & Dan DeBoer
Beth & Paul Terpstra
Ali & Brian Harskamp
Joyce Geleynse
Luke & Phyllis Geleynse
Emily & Derrick Don
Bart & Rachel Geleynse
Reuben & Karina Geleynse
Joel Geleynse
Irene & Carel Geleynse
Martinus & Nina Geleynse
David
Maria
Alexa
Liesje Van Zwol
Jessica
Karina & Brian Vaandering
George
Bill & Ingrid Los
Robin & Joel Dykstra
Rosanna
Derek & Chandra Los
Megan
Janelle
Chris & Nell Los
Kevin
Amy
Also blessed by 31 great-grandchildren.
"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace." Numbers 6:22-26
Rev. D.C. Los
RR 2
Listowel ON N4W 3G7

For Sale

1993 35 Ft Legend Trailer. Located in Little Europe Resort, Bracebridge. Great location in park - view of beach and river! 2 level cedar deck and awning. Sleeps 6.
For more info, see Kijiji ad #Ad 504810697 or 519-647-3847

2000 25 Foot Wildwood Trailer with addition and deck situated at Little Europe Resort, Bracebridge, Ont. Contact 905-937-3314.



Anniversaries

August 24, 2013

With thankfulness to God for His faithfulness, we celebrate the 50th Wedding Anniversary of our parents and grandparents

HENK AND VICKY VAN ANDEL

We love you
and wish you God's continued blessings!

Ken & Karen – Kevin, Jeffrey, Stephanie, Melissa, Jennifer, Matthew
Eric & Natalie – Stephen, Heather, David Harmen – Alex
David & Nicole – Devon, Ryan
Julie & Dan – Jordan, Brandon, Nathan, Leah

Address: 13607 - 109 Ave
Edmonton AB T5M 2G8



"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

JOHN AND ANDREA STRUYK (Benschop)

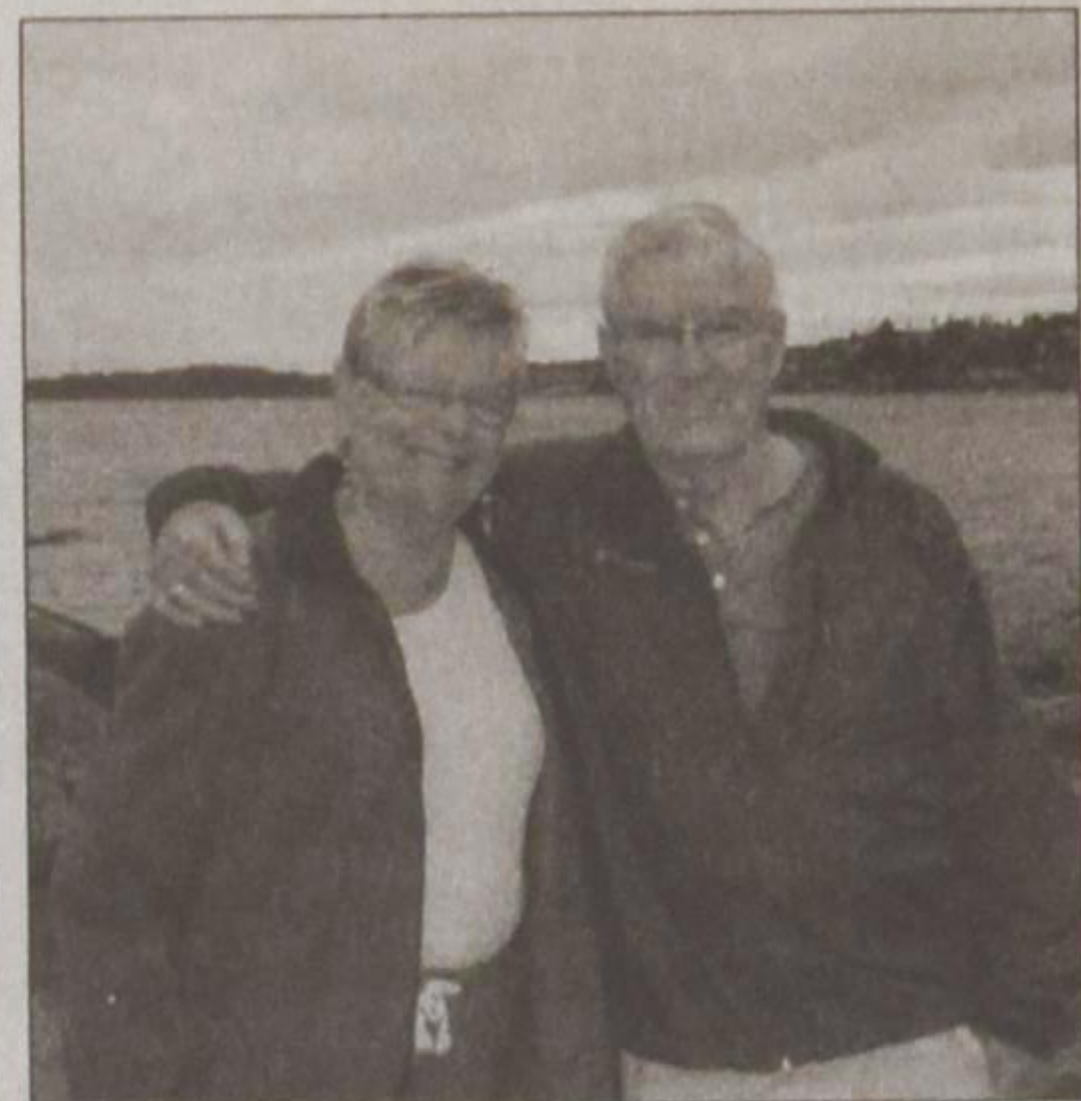
of Trenton Ontario celebrate 50 years of marriage on August 9, 2013.

Your commitment and love have been a blessing to your children and grandchildren.

Calvin & Anita
Tyler, Nathan, Eryn, Jonas
Mark & Angela
Catrina, Levi, Gabriel, Mischa
Christina & Eric
Quentin, Eli

We love you!

Address: 50 Gearin St.
Trenton ON K8V 3Y1



1963 August 14 2013
Psalm 23

With hearts full of joy and gratitude to God, we celebrate the 50th wedding anniversary of

HENK AND LIZ NIENHUIS (Lof)

Congratulations & much love from your children and grandchildren

Peggy & Kevin Smit – Kirkland, WA
Elizabeth & Nate Perkins
Josh
Kyle
Wilma & Ken Rauwerda – Nanaimo, BC
Kenny
Nathan
Peter & Katie Nienhuis – Victoria, BC
Ben
Sam

Address: 301 – 755 Goldstream Avenue
Victoria BC V9B 2X4

Vacation

Holiday accomodation in Holland with vehicle rentals, tours.
Website: chestnutlane.nl

August 29, 1948
Koekange, Drenthe

August 29, 2013
Grimsby, Ontario



With joy & thankfulness to our Lord we are happy to announce the 65th wedding anniversary of our dear parents

HENRY AND LAMMIE RUMPH (Steenbergen)

With love & congratulations from your family:

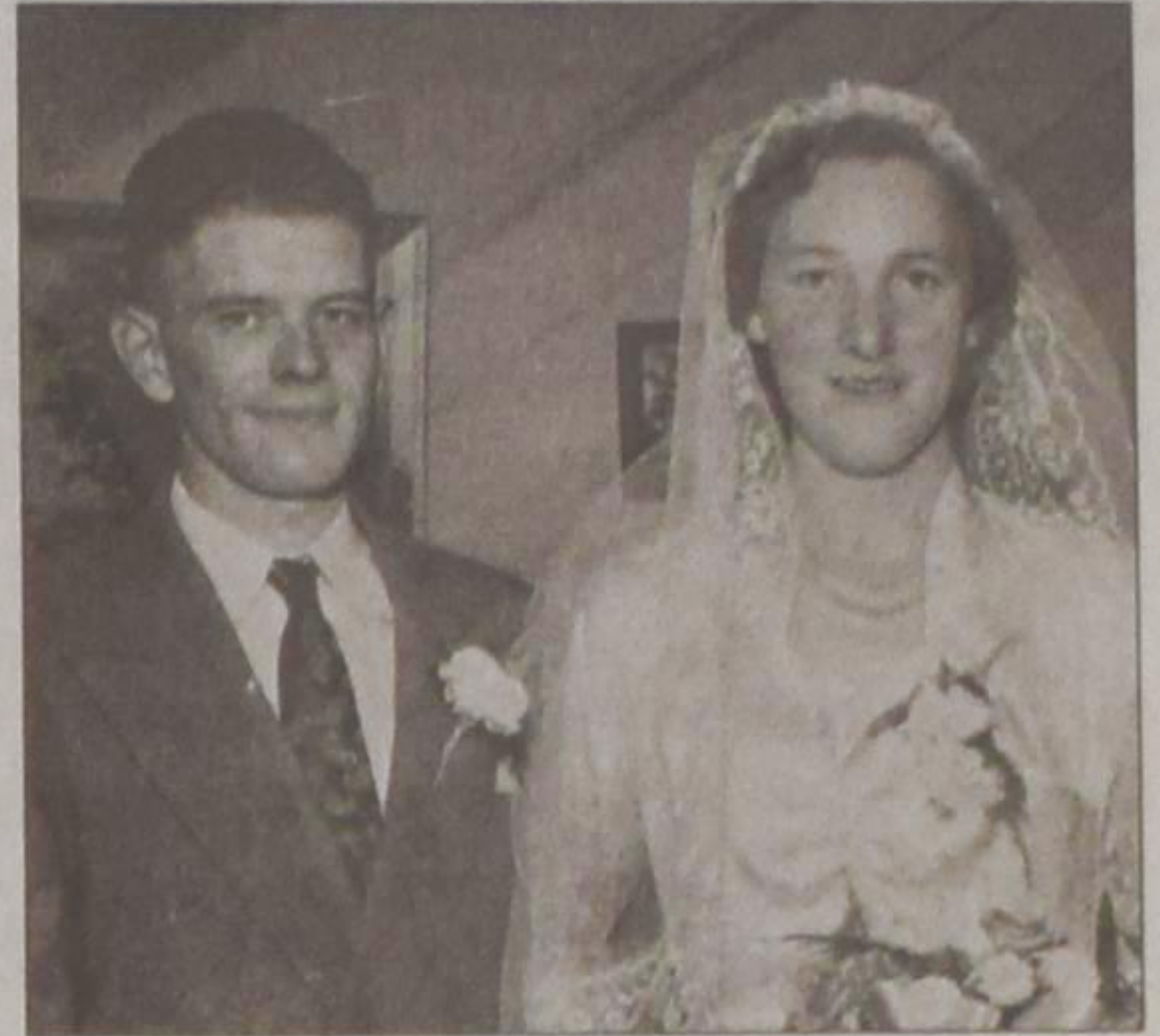
Mary & John DeWeerd
Julie & Elden Westendorp – Carly, Shaelyn, Justine
Mike & Tracy DeWeerd – Kaitlyn, Cody, Ryan, Richard
Steve & Judy DeWeerd – Jasmine, Josh, Jocelyn
Rob & Denise DeWeerd
Cindy & Henry Bloemberg
Lance & Cheryl Bloemberg – Jake, April
Mark & Kelly Bloemberg – Austin, Jaxson
Richard & Erin Bloemberg – Olivia, Avery
Albert & JoAnne Rumph
Debbi & Ryan Meester – Alana, Kailey
Janet & Harold Janssen
Christy & Jim Leva – Kaylyn, Tyler, Jenessa
Dan & Cheryl Janssen – Evan, Aren, Nolan
Brenda & Brian Kuyper – Irena, Charis
Irene & Art Dreyer
Kerry & Melissa Dreyer – Jacob, Braeden
Tim Dreyer & Ashleigh Steward – Ethan, Brody, Zoe
Jason & Alisha Dreyer – Aiden, Colin
Jeff & Courtney Dreyer – Austin
Arnold & Karen Eising
Melanie Eising
Shari Lynn & Ryan Streutker
Karina Eising
Brian & Tina Rumph
Victoria Rumph
Brandon Rumph
Laura Rumph

Family & friends are invited to an **OPEN HOUSE** on Saturday, August 24, 2013, from 2:00 to 4:00 P.M. at Mountainview Christian Reformed Church, 290 Main St. E., Grimsby, Ont.

Home address: 220 - 275 Main St. E.
Grimsby ON L3M 5N8



See Calendar of Events for details re:
the 8th annual Dutch Hymn Sing and the Netherlands Bazaar.



It is with joy in our hearts and thanksgiving to God, that we, the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren wish to announce the upcoming 60th Wedding Anniversary of

SID AND TONI RYZEBOL (Meijer)

They were married in Toronto on August 29, 1953.

Genesis 12:2b *"Be a blessing"*.

On Saturday, Aug. 31, 2013 there will be an **OPEN HOUSE** from 2:00 to 4:00 pm at the Township of Amaranth Hall 374028 6th Line, Amaranth, Ontario. Refreshments will be served in the outdoor pavilion, weather permitting, otherwise, inside the Hall.

If you are unable to join us but would like to send greetings and congratulations you may send them in care of Ben and Teresa Ryzebol: 393472 County Road 12 Amaranth ON L9W 0N1

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Sylvia & John Leistra – Glen Morris, Ont.
Mary-Joyce & Derrick Grift – Kitchener, Ont.
25 grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren.

60 Main St. W., Box 47
Drayton ON N0G 1P0

Obituary

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." - 2 Timothy 4:7

On July 8, 2013, the Lord called Home

Andrew Timmermans

in his 92nd year.

Preceded in death by his wife of 61 years, Jennifer, in 2004, and his oldest son, Bruce, in 1998.

He leaves to mourn:

Cathy & Cy Ypma – Barrie
Karen & Erik, Carmen, Serenity – Mission B.C.
Steve & Sylvia, Brooklyn – Duluth GA
Barbara & Jeff, Simantha – Lefroy Ont.
Mient & Harriet – Ottawa
Christina & Steve, Joshua, Jonah, Jordyn
Michael
Matthew
Tina – Toronto
Omar & Bess, Andrew, Alexis
Sy
Niiba & James, James

Also survived by his older brother and wife and many nieces and nephews and their families in the Netherlands.

Correspondence address: Cathy Ypma
9 James Street
Barrie ON L4N 6M4

the.ypmas@gmail.com

Classifieds

Obituaries

September 19, 1933
Doorwerth, Holland

July 13, 2013
Surrey, B.C.

Dick (Dirk) Van Beek

Entered peacefully into the presence of our Lord and Saviour on Saturday, July 13 at Surrey Memorial Hospital.

Beloved husband of:
Sharon Van Beek (†2011)

Dear Father of:
Susan Barbara (Pete) Peters
Peter George (Tracey) Van Beek

Loving Opa of:
Samantha Peters
Debra Peters
Shoukia Van Beek



A Celebration of Dick's life was held on Friday, July 19, 2013 at the Fleetwood Christian Reformed Church, Surrey, B.C., with Pastor Tom Bomhof officiating. Dick is dearly missed by his family and many friends.

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
Romans 8: 38-39

Correspondence: Peter van Beek
344 Westvale Drive
Waterloo ON N2T 2M1

Dr. Corrine Mary Gehrels

passed away peacefully, at the West Parry Sound Health Centre, after a courageous battle with cancer, with her family by her side, on July 28th, 2013. Age 50 years.

Beloved wife of Bill Webster

Loving mother of Michael and Thomas
Stepmother to Alan
Caring stepmother and proud Oma to Alisun, Linden and Bodhi

Cherished daughter of Jack and Lenie Gehrels
Dear sister of

Ken and his wife Sharon
Jim and his wife Lynda
Angela and her husband Karl DeVries
Betty-Ann and her husband Evan Reid

Fondly remembered by her many nieces, nephews, other relatives, and friends.

A Service of Gratitude was held at the Parry Sound Pentecostal Tabernacle on Wednesday July 31st.

Donations in memory of Corrine may be made to Lifewater (www.lifewater.ca), or the The Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches (memo Derek Parenteau).

To send an online condolence please visit
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Babine Truck & Equipment Ltd
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Fax: 250-847-5890

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kristie.spyksma@gmail.com

When you're done with pundits, soul wrestling and looking at the sky. . .

Continued from page 13

No gates

We are done looking into the sky – we are ready to fling open every door in our lives, we are ready to tear down every gate. We are the Esthers inside the gate – and the hurting and the poor, the oppressed and the ignored – is Christ on the other side of the gate. Christ is saying: "I was a stranger and you welcomed Me. I was the stranger on the other side of the gate – and you risked everything inside the gate for the One outside the gate – Me."

I look at Katie. Radical isn't as much about where you move – but about looking into the face of Jesus – and letting Him move you where you are. He may move you to Africa – or across the street. But if the love of Christ moves you – it will move you out into the world. He will move you to tear down gates.

Pundits can banter about the nature of marriage and truth and grace and orientation and the Church, and our screens can explode with opinions and rebuttals and politics.

But our answers to all the raging questions of the day won't be found in what we write: it will be found in how we open our doors.

Our actual theology is best expressed in our actual hospitality.

And I don't mean that hospitality is one quaint ministry for those



Katie: living Christ's love.

good in the kitchen and keeping their house picked up. Hospitality isn't for the good housekeepers – it's the grid of life for anyone keeping company with Christ. Hospitality is meant to shape our churches and politics, our work and our schools, our homes and our faith and our schedules and our meals and our lives.

Hospitality is life with no gates.

Hospitality means if there is room in the heart –

there is always room in the house.

And if we've really welcomed Christ into our lives – it means our lives are evidence that we've welcomed the strangers and the neglected and the outcasts.

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One of Katie's daughters had whispered it:

"Mommy, if Jesus comes to live inside my heart, will I explode?"

And Katie had said – "No!" and then –

"Yes, if Jesus comes to live in your heart, you will explode . . . That is exactly what we should do if Jesus comes to live inside our hearts.

We will explode with love, with compassion, with hurt for those who are hurting, and with joy for those who rejoice. We will

explode with a desire to be more, to be better, to be close to the One who made us."

And Africa undoes me and I'm exploded and broken wide open with the Esther Generation

– broken and exploded by Christ – a thousand bits of His Love bringing down the sky and tearing down gates. ✨

Named by Christianity Today as one of the 50 Women most shaping church and culture today, Ann Voskamp is the author of the New York Times Bestseller, One Thousand Gifts: a Dare to Live Fully Right Where You Are, mother to six crazy and wonderful kids, and wife to one hard-working farmer.
She blogs at: www.aholyexperience.com



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Classifieds

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Bible Puzzle (July 22 issue) Stumped?

Here is a list of the 30 books:

Acts, Amos, Chronicles, Daniel, Esther, Exodus, Genesis, Hebrews, Hosea variant 'Osee,' James, Job, Joel, John, Judges, Kings, Lamentations, Luke, Mark, Malachi, Matthew, Nahum, Numbers, Peter, Philemon, Revelation, Romans, Ruth, Samuel, Timothy, and Titus.

If you need to know where in the paragraph they can be found, email admin@christiancourier.ca

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Aug 25 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. John Zantingh will be preaching. DVDs are available

Aug 28 8th annual Dutch Hymn Sing, at 1:30 p.m. in the Westmount Christian Reformed Church, 405 Drury Lane, **Strathroy**. Need more information? Call Marianne Kingma at 519-245-039 or email - jmkimgma7@gmail.com

Sep 8 25th Anniversary: Thankful for God's faithfulness, New Life CRC of **Guelph**, Ont. celebrates its 25th anniversary. Praise God there is new life for all!

Oct 5 Netherlands Bazaar, to be held again at the recently renovated and enlarged **Thornhill** Community Centre, 7755 Bayview Ave.: Marketplace 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Features: Dutch delicacies, bake sale, groceries, gifts, handicrafts, books and much more. Free admission. All proceeds to the less fortunate in the Ontario Dutch-Canadian community. For donations and other information, visit our website: netherlandsbazaar.com, or phone 905-477-1243.

Oct 5-6 Maranatha CRC in **Belleville**, Ont. will celebrate its 60th anniversary with a BBQ and open house, banquet. Celebration service Sunday morning. For details, see ad or contact the church at 613-962-2062 ext. 200 or email info@maranatha-church.com.

Oct 19 Day of Encouragement Hamilton District Christian High, Ancaster, Ont. Details in following issues or online at diaconalministries.com

Oct 25 Christian Festival Concert. Toronto. See ad for details.

Oct 31-Nov 2 Andreas Center Conference. Dordt College. More info at: dordt.edu/events/conference2013/

Family ads

and recently run **job ads** can be found on our website by clicking on the links on the bottom banner of our homepage: christiancourier.ca

MARANATHA CRC in Belleville, Ont. will celebrate its **60th anniversary** on Oct. 5-6, 2013.

A neighbourhood BBQ and open house will be held on Saturday, Oct. 5 as well as a banquet that night and a celebration service Sunday morning.

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You are cordially invited to come to the

8th annual Dutch Hymn Sing

to be held d.v. on Wednesday afternoon,
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This year we are planning to spend some time singing the psalms but you will also be given an opportunity to choose your favourites. There will be a free-will offering for the Bible League. Please spread the word and invite your friends to come too! After the program there will be time for refreshments and fellowship.



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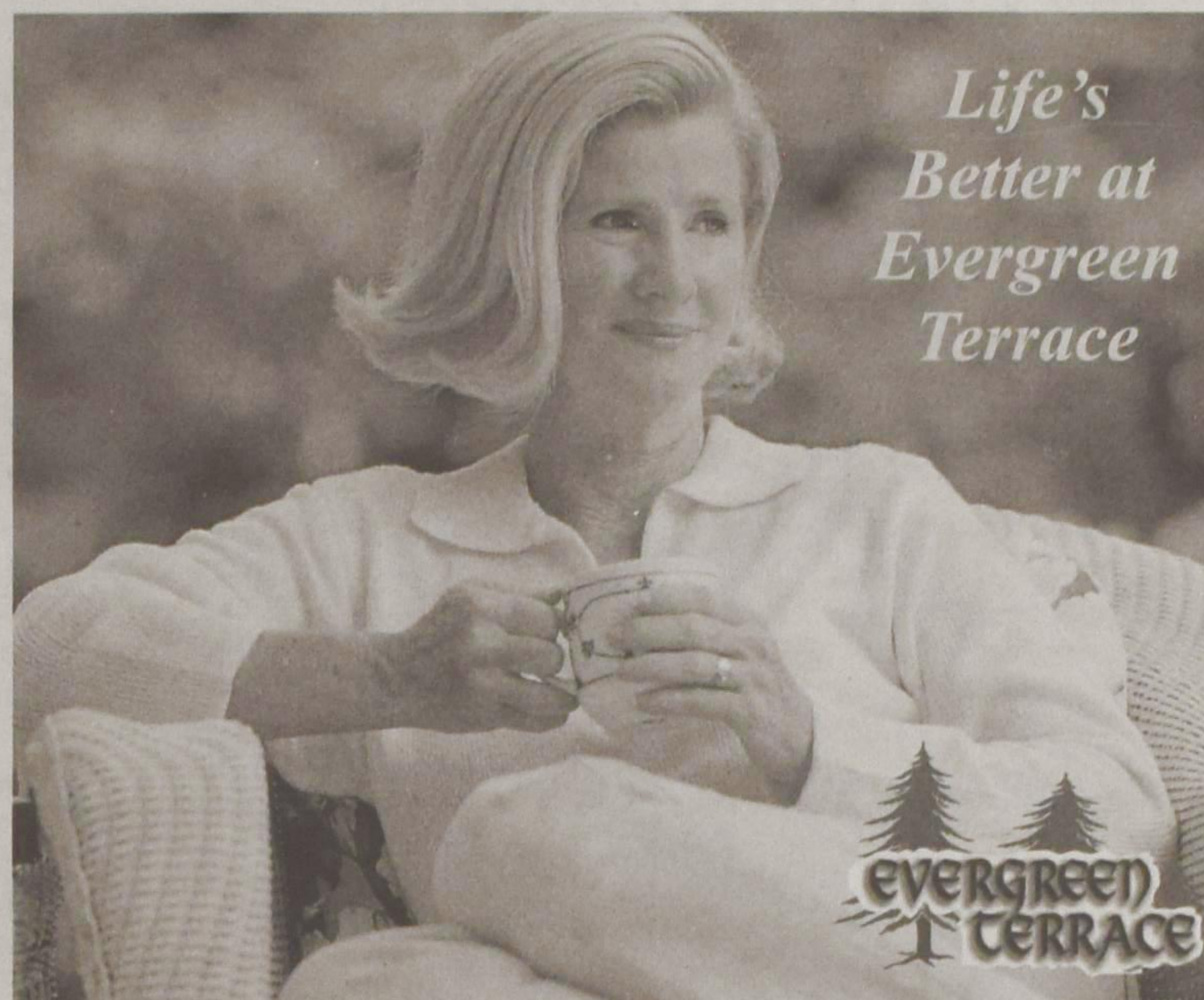
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News

Genes are God's invention: Court case prohibits patenting human genes

Greg Linnell

When Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie announced that she had had a preventative double mastectomy, it was big news on both sides of the border. In a *New York Times* op-ed, Jolie shared how genetic testing had revealed the presence of specific genes that, according to her doctors, gave her an 87 percent risk of developing breast cancer and a 50 percent risk of developing ovarian



Controversial genetic testing revealed an increased risk of breast cancer for Jolie.

cancer. The breast cancer risk was rated highly because Jolie's French-Canadian mother had died at 56 of cancer. Not wanting to take a chance, Jolie opted for surgery.

One month later, a controversial ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of *Association of Molecular Pathology vs. Myriad Genetics* made far fewer headlines. But the events are linked, and not just because Myriad Genetics owned the test that Jolie took. Rather, the Court's decision on the patenting of human genetic material has brought to prominence a series of profoundly significant and inter-related questions that have implications for how we all – not just celebrities – think about and practice jurisprudence, ethics, medicine and biotechnology.

Status quo, challenged and changed

On June 13, after two months of deliberation, the Court handed down a judgement in *Association of Molecular Pathology vs.*

Myriad Genetics which ended the decades-long practice of allowing researchers, investors and companies to patent human genes (i.e., a section of deoxyribonucleic acid or DNA that codes for the proteins that enable bodily processes, inherited traits and, when mutated, are either harmless or contributors to disease). For years the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office has granted patents on the knowledge, meth-

ods, uses, products and genes themselves that have resulted from commercial- and university-based research into the human genome. Now, naturally occurring human genes can no longer be patented, but everything else remains up for grabs.

The research cycle

Patents are a form of intellectual property that allow patent holders an exclusive right to make, use and sell an invention for a set period of time – 20 years in the United States. Then only the patent holder can license or sell the invention and recoup the money invested. In return for this right, the patent holder not only sells or licenses the knowledge or product to be used by others, but also discloses how the process or product works, allowing others to gain insights that may lead to more discoveries. Ideally, both patent holders and the public become part of a virtuous cycle of ongoing research, practical innovation and economic productivity that benefits all.

The Association for Molecular Pathology – the lead petitioner to the Court – argued that genes are products of nature and thus cannot be patented (in other words, they are not human inventions). Moreover, continuing to allow genes to be patented would stifle research and, consequently, the development and equitable delivery of beneficial processes and products. These petitioners, among them breast cancer patients, doctors of various specialties and academics, argued against Myriad Genetics – the lead respondent – who maintained, contrarily, that continuing to patent genes was legitimate and would encourage companies to invest in further research and development thereby contribute to medical innovation and the economy.

Myriad Genetics, Inc. were co-owners – along with the directors of the University of Utah Research Foundation – of patents on BRCA1 and BRCA2, two genes and the mutations associated with them that have been proven to correlate highly with the appearance of breast and ovarian cancer in women. The complaint brought by the

petitioners, however, was that Myriad had refused to either license the genes to other researchers or the diagnostic test for breast cancer to other medical laboratories. Not surprisingly, given this business strategy, Myriad's fortunes improved dramatically since its start in the mid-1990s. In 2012, the company's revenues approached \$500 million. Myriad's share price alone rose four percent on the Tuesday that Jolie revealed the details of her treatment.

The conundrums of genetic testing

Myriad's BRACAnalysis test, which screens for BRCA1 and BRCA2, costs between \$3,000 and \$5,000. In this regard, Angelina Jolie's decision to take the test and have surgery is worth noting. Though Jolie presumably had no problem affording either the tests or the associated medical procedures, the same cannot be said for many breast cancer patients who have limited health insurance. In Canada

genetic testing for breast cancer is usually covered by public health insurance. However, coverage hinges on the patient being able to demonstrate that at least two blood relatives have had breast cancer. In other words, only the third blood-related individual is eligible for free genetic testing.

Is such testing even useful? That question is up for debate. Only five to ten percent of all cancers are inherited; most cancers develop from lifestyle and environmental factors; and 90 percent of breast and ovarian cancers are "sporadic" (that is, there is no family history). It would seem, then, that genetic testing for breast cancer only helps a statistically small group of women.

Now that Myriad no longer has exclusive rights over BRCA1 and BRCA2 testing, its cost is likely to come down, perhaps to as low as \$150. And advocates for predictive genetic testing of this sort argue that the costs could be lowered further should such testing become widespread.

What is needed

Perhaps one of the most intriguing aspects of the Supreme Court case is that it was decided in terms of intellectual property law and not with respect to bioethics. An *amicus curiae* brief, which included bioethical pronouncements by the Catholic and United Methodist churches, as well as the World Council of Churches, was filed with the Court by the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, but nowhere does the Court's decision reference theological and moral arguments. Instead, the decision related to the intricacies of patent law alone – the utilitarian "delicate balance" needed between inventor and public in order to promote the virtuous cycle mentioned previously.

In other words, the theological, moral and bioethical languages developed in the discussion of the fundamental issues surrounding human life have been marginalized by legal language that re-

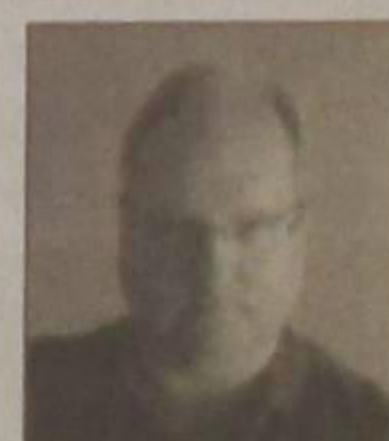


Myriad Genetics "discovered" the genes but shouldn't own them, protestors say.

duces human genetic material to a matter of property, a commodity that can be owned and licensed. Happily, in this case, the social and ethical foundations of U.S. patent law ended up affirming the inherent worth and dignity of God's image-bearers. (Cultural critiques of commodification are no less potent on this score than what patent law provides – consider the critically acclaimed TV series *Orphan Black*, which dramatizes the resistance of human clones to those who wish to commodify them, a danger discussed in genetic engineering research since the mid-1960s.)

But, as this case also demonstrated, Christians cannot become complacent; theological or moral language does not immediately resonate with the diverse publics that make up the world's democracies. We need Christian brothers and sisters educated in law, biotechnology and ethics – and informed by a biblical anthropology – to look hard and long at what is coming. We need communities to host and facilitate the development of a prophetic Christian imagination that will resist, discern and provide a life-giving response to those cultural, ethical and technological policies and practices that would curtail and prevent obedient responses to the Lord of life. We need to challenge and puncture the Babel-like hubris that runs unchecked among some of the cultural elites and the technocrats who are envisioning a future that does not reference the God whose image we bear. The nature of the changes that we can now accomplish demands no less.

Greg Linnell lives in Kitchener, Ont. where he attends Community Christian Reformed Church.



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